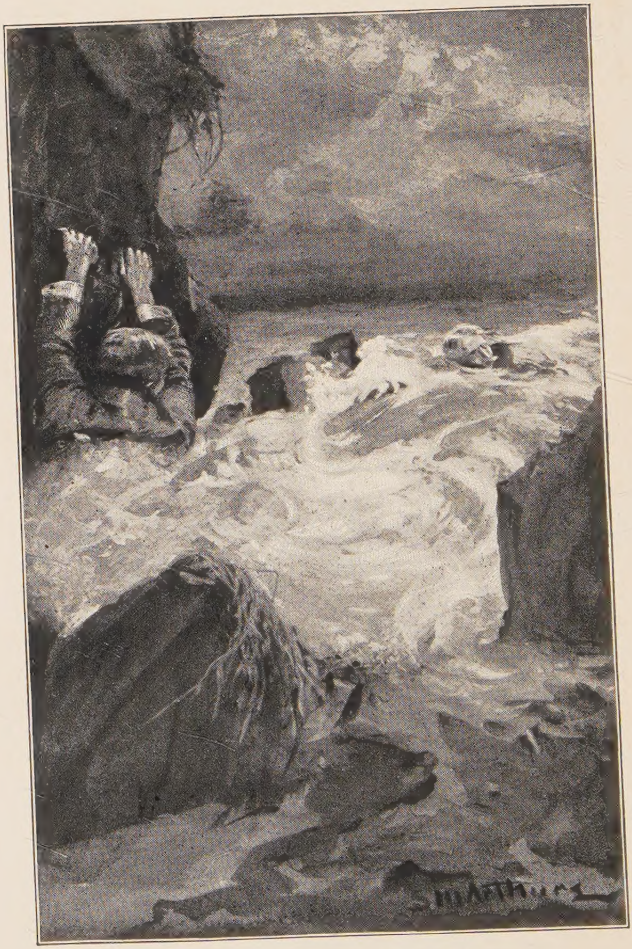
A SUMMER HYMNAL

By JOHN TROTWOOD MOORE

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2025

https://archive.org/details/bwb_Y0-BAO-168



"Here! Here I am!"

A SUMMER HYMNAL

A Romance of Tennessee

By John Trotwood Moore

Author of "Ole Mistis," etc

JOHN C. WINSTON COMPANY | PHILADELPHIA 1907

COPYRIGHT, 1901, BY HENRY T. COATES & COMPANY

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

To

Thesis.

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER		PAGE
I.	The Cat-Bird,	5
II.	The Blind Man,	17
III.	Two Preachers,	29
IV.	Art in Nature,	43
V.	The Thrasher,	57
VI.	Thesis,	69
VII.	A Bird Biographer,	91
VIII.	The Jewel that Lives,	103
IX.	The Battle in Her Eyes,	121
X.	The Victory of Fire,	137
XI.	A Smile in the Dark,	161
XII.	The Sorrowing Stars,	173
XIII.	The Recompense,	193
XIV.	The Dream of a Melody,	209
XV.	The Secret of the Hills,	215

CHAPTER		PAGE
XVI.	Little Miss Fiddle, ...	227
XVII.	The Light Reflected, ...	243
XVIII.	The Blind Detective, ...	251
XIX.	The Picture of a Rose, ...	271
XX.	The Unpaced Race, ...	287
XXI.	A Pike of Battles, ...	299
XXII.	My Love has Come as a Lily, . . .	331

THE CAT-BIRD.

POET, when he wants to be—
A blue song-wave of melody—
Wood-thrush, thrasher, oriole,
Poet notes that upward roll—
A lullaby of trick and trill,
The robin's call across the hill.

Poet, when he wants to be—
Ay, more than poet, singer he—
Singer—for now the mocking-bird
From honeysuckle vine is heard,
Trilling, trilling—alas, the fall
Ending in a harsh cat-call.

Poet, when he wants to be—
Alas, the lesson we may see—
The life-songs that around us float,
Ending in a broken note.

CHAPTER I.

IF people would only study birds, they would learn a great deal more about how to get along in life.

The two cat-birds which annually make their nest in a beautiful white-rose bush that climbs and blossoms over my front gallery, arrived on schedule-time about three weeks ago. Spring has come late in Tennessee this year, later than I have known it for years, and the blue-grass is shorter this May than it generally is in June.

I did not see the cat-birds for several days after they arrived. They were so busy building their nest. I wanted to ask them where they had been all the winter, and what the news was where they came from, and how they liked it down South where they wintered, and many other questions. But I saw they

were very busy preparing to go to housekeeping and didn't want to be bothered just then.

It's with birds as it is with people—if you want to retain their respect and friendship don't bother them with visits and questions when they are busy.

For home building is half of life. Give two sensible young people a home, paid for and their very own, and their future is half made, their destiny is half solved. If you strike the home idea from the life of the Anglo-Saxon race, in a few generations they will be tribes of Arabs. Those who have no homes have no anchor in life—no fixed purpose—and hence not very much to live for.

Now these two birds are very sensible little people, and when I see them building their home every year in the rose-bush I confess they taught me something I had not thought of before; the prettier the home they build the more elevating is the life purpose.

These two little birds had a thousand and one places in which they might have built their home. There were the cherry trees, the big oaks—white, black and chincapin — the

elms, the close-tangled shrubbery, and even the honeysuckle vine in the garden.

But no, they must have the prettiest home they can find, just under the eaves of my gallery, carpeted in bright colors, windowed with deep niches of light, with stained-glass rose-leaves to catch it and make it as soft as any cathedral's, and the roof all painted with green and shingled with roses that tower above like the parapets of a mosque—and all so convenient to crumbs from my dining-room table!

"Miss Cynthia," I said—

—Miss Cynthia is my housekeeper. She was my mother's sister's husband's niece. Now it would have been just as easy to say she was my uncle's niece, but that is the way Miss Cynthia always put it, as if she was proud of the mathematical differentiation involved, and so I state it that way, too. Miss Cynthia was also proud of the fact that she was fifty-two and had never been any more interested in a man than she had been in the rise and fall of the Roman Empire.—

"Miss Cynthia," I said, "it is the surroundings of life that elevate us or pull us down, and

they do it so gradually that we are up or down before we know it. Nay, so gradually that sometimes it is several generations before the world discovers a family to be up or down. I know of families which culminated,—no other word will suit, Miss Cynthia,—generations ago, in some statesman, soldier, poet,—some big brain of some kind. I know them to-day," I added, with emphasis, "when the bright reflection from the shadow of that star is all they have to penetrate the twilight of their own mediocrity.

"There was a gift from God and an uplifting environment in the life of the star of the family ; there was the holding back from God and the down-drawing tendency in the life of the descendants——"

"I have thought of something I have wanted to ask you," said Miss Cynthia, breaking in on my peroration.

"You know you can ask me anything you wish, you always do," I said, "but I hope it will suggest other thoughts on this interesting subject."

"No, but your speaking of twilight and the

down-drawing environments of life make me think of grasshoppers. Do they feed at night as well as in the day ?"

"Miss Cynthia," I replied, "will you pardon me for telling you for the one-hundredth time that such a question is entirely irrelevant to the subject we were discussing ? And now may I ask you a question ?"

Miss Cynthia nodded.

"Is supper ready ?"

She did not reply, but went in and rang the bell.

After supper I went out again on the porch and sat near the rose-vine that held the cat-birds' nest. There was one egg in it, and both birds were trying to keep it warm, as is their custom. Miss Cynthia had seen to the putting away of the tea things, and was sitting near me embroidering a bust of Andrew Jackson on a screen to go into the fireplace in the company-room, in the Summer.

"I was telling you before supper about the environments of life as illustrated by birds, Miss Cynthia," I said after a while, "and I will tell you where I learned it. These birds

told me the whole story the other day in their own bird language. The cat-bird, you know, Miss Cynthia, is about the same size and shape as the mocking-bird and of a deep slate-blue. They belong to the same family of mockers, only the cat-bird is lower down in the scale. They are not much at singing, except during the mating season; then the male sometimes gets so full of melody he mounts the twig of a neighboring bough and sings, for a while, with the splendor imitative of the mocking-bird. By the way, Miss Cynthia, that proves that only people with the mating instinct in their hearts ever make true singers. Only good lovers make good poets."

Miss Cynthia grunted rather cynically, I thought.

"However," I continued, "he is only a quarter-horse compared to the mocking-bird—he cannot carry his clip a full mile. And worse than that, he can only run his bars in short, parallel lines—he cannot connect them with the rich, full notes that make his cousin master of all sounds. The cat-bird can strike chords, but the mocking-bird can blend them

into lines of harmony and trill them into waves of melody.)

"Now, at first, these little housekeepers were very shy of me, and if I gathered a rose from off their house, or peered too closely into their nest, they were greatly affronted, and, perched on a neighboring limb, made the air discordant with their angry cat-calls. That is the sad thing about cat-birds, that they can sing so sweetly and yet make those discordant, spiteful notes. We have many singers among men like them, Miss Cynthia,—mocking-birds in company, cat-birds at home.

"But a few crumbs placed on the railing every day has convinced them I am their friend, and now I can almost touch the female as she sits upon her eggs. This proves, Miss Cynthia, that a little kindness and patience is the greatest thing in the world for making friends of birds, as well as of other people.

"But I was repaid for all of it the other day while listening to the male bird sing. He was perched in a cherry tree, just across from the rose-bush, and was entertaining his mate with his imitative song. Presently he struck a few

bars I had not heard him utter before. He soared just a little higher in his flight than he was wont to do when he first came to visit me in the early housekeeping days. And that song said to me as plainly as ever language spoke: 'Do you see the influence of a beautiful home and that little wife over there in the nest? Surprised that I went up that high, are you? Well, it is funny, and I am a little surprised myself. I didn't know I could do it. By the great Spread Eagle, but is it not smart of me to do that note all by myself, and not a cat-bird that ever lived has done it before? How did I do it? Why, easy enough. I was singing along in the same old way, like we cat-birds have done all our lives, feeling pretty good, you know, and full of song. I can't tell you how it happened, except that a gleam of joy from our pretty home got into my song and a love-bar or two at thought of the beautiful creature that was keeping house for me. Then, all at once, I felt a great uplifting—greater than any cat-bird ever felt before, and—there you are. I have set a mark for cat-birds, by the great Spread Eagle

I have!—and I tell you right now, if we have good luck and raise our little fellows in this pretty home, and under that eave of roses and amid the softened light of the rose-leaves, and the sweet, quiet air of all this peaceful nest, who doubts but one of them may yet sit upon this twig and sing as sweetly as any mocking-bird that ever lived. What makes song? Character, heart, brain. What makes character? The influence of that which is good and the exercise of that influence. Now if we keep a healthy heart and brain, and year after year and generation after generation keep on adding loftiness to loftiness, and strength to strength—character-breeding—and all under the influence of peace and truth and happiness and virtue, what's the reason a cat-bird won't be hatched some day who will have all of these in him so strongly that he will burst out in song and tell the world all about it, as sweetly as any mocking-bird ever did?'"

Miss Cynthia embroidered along in silence for a while. Then she said: "I wanted to ask you another question, but I have forgotten it."

"Now in the case of these birds," I went on.

"Oh, yes, I remember now," chirped in Miss Cynthia. "The Jersey cow has not been eating well of late, and old Wash says she has lost her cud. Do you really think a cow can lose her cud?"

"Much easier than a woman can lose her tongue," I grunted savagely, for I hated to be interrupted in that way. That was mean of me, I know, for when I thought of it afterwards, man-like, I had done all the talking.

Miss Cynthia jabbed her needle in Andrew Jackson's eye and went in.

THE BLIND MAN.

WHEN I wake up in the mornin', in the
laughin', smilin' mornin',
With my soul keyed liked a fiddle an' my
heart keyed like a lute,
An' memory-maids come trippin', an' a slidin'
an' a slippin',
An' floodin' all my heart house with the faint
notes of their flute—
Then my lips jus' longs to utter little songs
that kind o' flutter
'Round the earthly cage that coops them, an'
would fly up in the light,
An' to my soul all yearnin', little fire-fly
thoughts come burnin'
An' bringin' spirit-lanterns that would lead
it out of night—
When I wake up in the mornin'.
When I wake up in the mornin', in that solemn,
silent mornin',

A Summer Hymnal

After long, long years of slumber, an' long,
long years of sleep,
When my spirit's bird has rested in the heav-
enly air it breasted
An' its golden pinions tested for their flight
across the Deep—
Lord, I know my soul will flutter up to heaven,
an' will utter
In a clearer note the songs it only tried to
sing below ;
An' these fitful, fiery flashes from the pale
hope of my ashes
Will be altars of star incense in the glory
of Thy glow—
When I wake up in the mornin'.

CHAPTER II.

ALL trees to me are beautiful—I love them all—but none appeal to me so strongly as the yellow locust, that silent and unselfish coverer and protector of barren places, who lifts his garlanded head above the neglected spots which other trees, having exhausted, lover-like, now shun, spangling the seared and blistered earth with his cream-bell clusters, moistening it with his tears, soothing and shading it with the shadow of his own sweet grief. Ah! what a Samaritan, among trees, he is, giving his life to the stricken places of earth, his heart's perfume to those that know no other sweetness.

And so I love this tree, because of all the trees of the forest, this rugged worker is one of the few which sends up to his Maker the incense of his soul—a tree-prayer, wafted

from the heart of a blossom to the soul of a star.

And why is this? Why should this wrestler with a stunted soil,—this farmer-tree, good anywhere from the fence-post of poverty to the flag-staff of sentiment,—alone be the one to pay back in sweetness the tribute of his heart for the beneficence of life? The oak, the elm, the ash, the beech—these and many others are stronger, more prosperous, handsomer, better-bred, more aristocratic, so to speak. They require a richer surface, a deeper soil. Their palates, forsooth, are finer, and they need a daintier morsel to crush beneath their tongues. But where is their perfume? Where is their tribute?

To the careless passer-by, who judges trees as he does men, the homely locust would scarcely be noticed. It is only when the Silent Questioner of Hearts points his finger at each and asks for their talent that the rugged locust, with his bell-shaped blossom, stands out, the poet among them all—the tribute-bearer of a struggling world to the silent stars.

Aye, and I have wondered at this—that flint and clay should bring the strength, toil and trials the blossoms; that worth should be the perfume the crucible of pain extracts from the lilies of labor; that sorrow alone should be able to gather up the soul-cells of sweetness and toss them back to a yearning world.

I do not know why I should associate the yellow locust with the Blind Man, but for some reason I always do. Now the Blind Man is a friend of mine from whom I have learned more than from many people who claim to see. For I consider that man truly remarkable who, having not eyes, yet sees all things. Ruskin puts it prettily: "The more I think of it, I find the conclusion more impressed upon me that the greatest thing a human soul ever does in this world is to see something. Hundreds of people can talk to one who can think, but thousands can think for one who can see. To see clearly is poetry, prophecy and religion all in one."

It is so unusal to see a blind man in a small town, that people do not often call Mr. Emer-

son by his real name. He is known generally as the Blind Man.

It came upon him, a bolt from a clear sky. It is not so sad, so hard to bear, if one becomes blind gradually, if one sickens gradually—dies gradually. There is a wonderful faculty of adjustment to circumstances and environments in the weakest and timidest and most shrinking of souls. God is kind even in death; and Nature, like a gentle mother, always soothes us, holds us sweetly to her breast ere she puts us to sleep.

But oh, these sudden things that crush and annihilate before the soul can brace itself for the shock!

He was a prosperous business man, the livest, most active, most far-seeing in the town. Planning, doing, working—bubbling with life and ambition — a hundred interests in his hands. A man who saw, and, seeing, enjoyed life as few men do. For he did the rare thing of taking time, even in his business, to enjoy life. A great mixer, so to speak—a great knower of men. A lover of fields and woods, and therefore a poet. To this he would de-

mur, but I always thought so. And everything is poetry to the man who thinks they are poems. A marksman, an angler, a horseman—open-hearted, jolly—a full-blooded man in everything.

But one day the bank failed, and before sunset he was a bankrupt.

He was full of wise saws, too. As I never could find them in books, I always believed he made them himself. And so that evening when I wrung his hand in sympathy, to my surprise he laughed as jollily as ever he did, and said: "Cowards quit in the back-stretch, Ned; good blood never gives up."

I think he got that from his love of good horses.

The next week as he walked down the streets of the town he was seen to fall. It was apoplexy. For two days he was unconscious. When he awoke he tried to see, but it was dark. It has remained dark with him ever since. I was with him when he waked.

"Ned," he said, "light a lamp, my boy; it should be nearly day."

I went over, took his hand and sat on the bedside.

"It is four o'clock in the afternoon and the sun is shining through the west window. I was just going to draw the shade and shut it from your eyes," I said as gently as I could.

It was only a moment that I saw his cheek blanch, his hands clinch. Then he smiled in his cheery old way, and said: "Well, but I'm glad I'm alive, even if I can't see. No, I don't think I'll need any more shades, Ned; it is midnight with me."

It was an hour before he spoke again. I had busied myself about the room, but when I looked at him he was trying to find a handkerchief under his pillow. He gave it up and had to ask me to find it for him. When I handed it to him he smiled through his tears and repeated Milton's sonnet to his blindness. I shall never forget his interpretation of the last line:

"They also serve who only stand and wait."

But that was all; and even the next week, when a friend forgot himself and sympathized with him, he laughed and added another saw

to his sayings: "Don't weep over your own misfortunes until you fail to find some one who has greater ones."

Before he was able to be up he seemed to have planned it all out, and with a negro boy to lead him he was soon as busy a man as ever—and more cheerful. "For cheerfulness," he would always say, "is the smile the soul owes to its Maker."

It was positive sunlight to be near him, an inspiration to be with him.

To-day, as I have often done, I drove by his place to give him an airing and take him to my farm in the outskirts of town. I am willing to admit that I am selfish enough to wish to garner up his wisdom. I need this blind man to help me to see.

As we drove a merry clip down the pike he said, "Let me feel of her mouth, Ned; I used to love to pull the ribbons over a good horse myself. Just keep us in the road, and I won't need help until I go to pass some one. Did you ever think of it, my boy, that it's so in life? It's dealing with other people that brings in the rub of life. We always get along

smoothly enough by ourselves. It's the passings of life, the obligations we owe to others, that we must be careful of."

We had driven a mile when he handed me back the lines and said, "There are some very light clouds in the west. They are making the sun just hazy enough to be soothing and good—not too hot. What a lovely day to look at Nature! Do you see the blue in that patch of clouds in the west, Ned?"

"Yes," I smiled; "but how did you see it? How did you know there were clouds in the west?"

"We blind people see more than you other people know. There is compensation in everything. We don't lose anything in life, unless we throw it away ourselves. I can see the skies and clouds more distinctly than ever, because the spirit eye is truer than the physical eye. As for the clouds, that's easy enough. It doesn't take a blind man long to become very sensitive to outside influences. He soon feels the difference when the sun is shining through a cloud or a mist and when it shines through the unclouded skies."

At the farm I left him in the buggy while I went around to give orders for the morning's work. The mare was given her head and was quietly cropping the blue grass beneath when I came back an hour afterwards, flushed and tired.

"You people that can see and must walk around," he laughed, "worry a great deal about life. You really lose a great deal of real life. Now, while you were away on your business I have had a delightful sunbath and heard an orchestra that beats anything you pay a dollar for in a theatre. How many birds do you suppose I have counted since you left?"

"Why, I don't know," I said. "I don't see how you have counted any. I don't see any."

"Sixteen. Now, don't take my word for it, because I'm blind, you know; but just look and see for yourself as I point them out to you."

TWO PREACHERS.

TWO preachers were preachin' the other day,
An' both of their sermons I heard;
One preached like a preacher the same old way,
But the other one preached like a bird.

"You must join my church or be lost—lost—lost,"
The one in the pulpit did say,
But he in the tree his little head toss'd
An' kept on a singin' away.

"An' my creed is this, an' my creed is that,"
Said he of the pulpit that day,
But he of the tree stood firm an' pat
An' sang on in his sweet little way.

Then he of the pulpit he talked of fire
An' spoke of a wrath above,

But the song from the tree rose higher an' higher,
An' the soul of that song was—love.

An' it lifted me up on the wings of the song,
Up—up to my Maker above,
Till my heart it repented of every wrong
An' my soul it jus' bubbled with love!

Two preachers were preachin'—Yes, that is the rule,
An' those were the sermons I heard—
An' the one in the pulpit—he was a fool—
But the one in the tree was a bird!

CHAPTER III.

I GOT into the buggy with him. It was one of those evenings Spring so often gives us, in which the day seems verily to live and breathe. One of those which, if you tickle it, it will laugh, if you scold it, it will weep—make love to it and it will cling, Juliet-like, around your neck.

The Blind Man was very much interested. His whole countenance changes when he becomes interested. His soul, like some fiery star, shone in the blue vaults of his earnest eyes. It is true it is night there, but it only makes the stars shine the brighter.

"Ned," he said, "it is a grand, a glorious thing to love the things that God made—to love them, and through them Him that made them. But it is also sweet to be loved by them. And He is so much better to us than

we deserve. He has made things so beautiful and pure and wholesome around us ; so abundant and varied, so simple, so fitted for our needs, so appropriate and altogether good. And, Ned, sometimes I think we don't appreciate them.

"He has made everything so fitting for us, and if we be but truthful and pure, we fit them. For a truth fits every other truth in the world, but a lie fits nothing but some other lie made especially for it.

"Take the material things He has given us, Ned, and consider them—all the way from the fruit of the fields to the ripened fruit of the vine. And things ornamental, from the jewels of the hills to those of our hearthstone. And things beautiful, from the dew-drop in the bosom of the flower to the star in the bosom of the sky. And loving things, things that make life holy and lovely and all to be desired—from the love that comes up from our cradles and friends, even unto that surpassing love that comes from the heart of God Himself. Take them all, from the plenty of the earth and the plenty of the sea, and the plenty of the air—

Oh, how I love the birds!—and the glorious prodigality of the heavens which declare His glory. And all so beautiful, wholesome and pure.

"And the beauty of it, Ned, He is so generous. He's giving us so much—and we need so little. And we are so foolish, Ned, such children. He has laid down so few laws for our happiness, and we have made them so many, and even these have failed to attain their ends. And so few for our health, and, behold, our doctors and our drugs!

"'Love one another,' He says; 'be truthful; do not covet, lie, steal, murder, nor be impure in thought or deed.' That's all. Isn't it simple enough? And yet, see the changes and ramifications of man, until society has more laws than Rome under Caligula, and fashion is a greater tyrant than Nero; and the churches, Ned—they are all right and the best things we have to direct us here, but they seem to need more forms and creeds and by-laws than God did when he made the world.

"Hello, but that's preaching; isn't it, Ned? Pshaw! a man mustn't do that. It's so easy

to do it. The hard thing, Ned, is to live a sermon. Now, birds live sermons—they do, old fellow !—sermons with a choir attachment. And where will you find anything better than the hymnal of their songs ? More than all that, they are everything that people are, and more. They are nearer human than anything lower than man. Birds alone come nearer to ideal married life in the rearing of their young and the care and protection both parents give to their offspring than anything else. All the others of the lower world leave the care of the children to the mother alone—not so with the birds. They are the tenderest and most loving of husbands, the most affectionate and thoughtful of fathers. Singing to, caressing, feeding his wife as she sits upon the eggs. Helping her feed and rear the little ones when they are born—yes, Ned, born—for I've seen many humans whom you could not honor with the assertion that they were even hatched !

"Human ! Why, Ned, they are poets and artists, philosophers, statesmen, warriors, mathematicians, everything. They know

more about the weather, the tides, the winds and the stars than we do. More about Nature than man ever conceived in his selfishness. More about God than all the priests. Every bird-life is an ideal love-life. Each little one that lives and breathes fills a predestined niche in the great temple of Time, is a tiny link in the chain of the great That Is. The ruthless destruction of any one, for whatever cause, whether for sport or to adorn the upper extremity of some less beautiful and lovely creature, throws the rules of truth, the laws of the universe, that much out of balance.

"After you left me," he said, after a pause, "I sat here in the mellow sunlight and just began to listen to see how many of them I could see. An early cardinal sprang first from a thicket, mounted the topmost twig of that sugar maple, and slyly and quietly fired his first rapid-fire love-notes in the face of the world for the pure fun of the thing, and darted back into the thicket. How did I know it was a sugar maple? Because I knew it was in full leafage, that it is always among the first to leaf in the spring, and the

cardinal is too shy to expose himself in a naked tree.

"It was some time before another came on the boards—this time it was the king of all wrens—the Carolina wren. He gave me a pretty little solo, with a flirting tail accompaniment, from the hedge yonder. Then a crow flew over me, and the way he was burning the air was a lesson. I knew what was the matter—the thieving rascal had been caught plundering by the king bird, and that game little fellow, that will fight a buzz-saw or an army in Flanders, was scurrying him through the air with a chastisement he'll not soon forget. A blue-jay lit in that oak there, and bobbed around a while, imitating the call of a chicken hawk. He is a beautiful fellow—I wish he were half as good. In the distance I caught the notes of a butcher-bird—the formidable shrike. Talk about human—why, that fellow is the finest example of original sin, in original man, in the world. Like his prototype, he butchers for the pure love of it, and unable to consume all he kills, he hangs the rest in the smoke-house to sell, perhaps, to his less

fortunate brother, and cheat him, if he can, in the transaction. If his name isn't Cain I'd like to know why. A crested fly-catcher dashed out from the top of that telegraph-pole, took in some luckless moth, wheeled suddenly in the air, uttered his quick, triumphant note, and settled down in the same place, waiting for another one. Two mating doves flew up from the stubble-field near the road when a vehicle passed. I knew them, of course, by the peculiar whistle of their wings when they flew over me. Then, as the hour went by, one by one I counted the notes of the pewee, the pretty song of the vesper sparrow, the chirps of the white-crowned and the white-throated sparrow, the chicadee, purple martin, cat-bird, and the detestable, wheezing chirp of the cow-bird. By the way, Ned, who ever saw anything more human than the cow-bird, laying its big eggs in the nest of some other bird, to starve out and crowd out a gentler brood, and transmit the selfish lesson of its heredity down the line of its life.

"That's what I've counted, Ned, in one hour — sixteen! Isn't it glorious? Give

me another hour and I'll count that many more."

We both bowed our heads and listened. A mocking-bird, which I had observed for ten minutes sitting on the topmost twig of a wild cherry tree near us, with that calm quietness and serene look of faith in his powers and in himself with which a prima donna would survey a gallery of expectant listeners, suddenly broke the pent-up emotions of his soul with a few nervous, rapid-fire, but soft and sweet notes. These leaped quickly upward and abroad, ablaze and aglow, as a spark runs through a sedge-field. In a moment he had fired the very air-waves with the touch of his genius—had burned the wind with melody. For a half hour we spoke not, only listened. And then the great musician flew away, singing as he went.

I looked up. There were tears in the Blind Man's eyes.

"Ned, the other day I went to church and had the misfortune to hear a little bigot preach. There are glorious men in the pulpit, Ned, but there are lots of little bigots there,

who would burn a man at the stake yet for not believing in their own peculiar doctrines. It is strange, too, they will let these little fellows preach. Every other man must be educated for his profession, but all that one needs is an abiding faith that he has been called. Well, it was my misfortune to hear one of them. But the windows were up, fortunately, and one of those glorious singers—shall I say preachers?—from a near-by tree began the sermon of his song. Do you wonder I heard only it?"

The sun was setting when we started back to town. Down behind a bank of clouds he sank, throwing a hundred fan-like radiations half way across the heavens. I did not say anything about the beauty of it because I did not wish to remind the Blind Man of his loss. He himself broke the silence by saying,

"Yes, I should love to see the sunset you are looking at. But I can see one as plainly as yours. It was in Montana once—I was on a hunting trip. It was in that clear pure atmosphere, and I can see it to-day as plainly as then. To me, now, when I can see no

longer, it looks like the vestibule of heaven in the twilight hours when the Angels pray—lit with lamps of every colored star, reflected back from walls of jasper and pearl."

Presently we swept into an avenue of stately trees along the pike. A brick residence, with four pillars fitting under a simple frieze and flanked with two wings, sat in a grove on a gentle slope.

"Why, it is Fairview," said the Blind Man. "I wonder if the Philips girls have got back home. They graduated last month and have been in Washington since," he said.

There was a turn in the road, I saw a phaeton and a horse, my heart jumped quickly, and a merry laugh rang out as I pulled up the mare.

"Oh, it's old Tem—bless his heart!" There was a quick scrambling from the phaeton and a gliding in among my wheels.

"And Ned, too,—isn't this sudden, Bernice?" she laughed to her companion, who sat in the phaeton holding the lines and nodding smilingly at us.

She had shaken my hand with scarce a

glance, I thought, then hurried on and held the Blind Man's in both of hers.

"Tem, you old owl, how are you? And why didn't you answer my last letter?"

The Blind Man's face broke into a radiant smile.

"Thesis!" he laughed and shouted—"Speak of angels, you know." And, reaching out, he drew her into the buggy with us.

"This will crowd me out," I said, "so I'll exchange with her, Bernice," and I went over to the phaeton. Thesis gave me a half-reproachful glance and then nestled by the Blind Man's side in her old way, and they were soon telling each other all they knew—the wonderful happenings in the town since she had seen him nearly a year ago.

I was never fully at home with Bernice—I do not think anybody was. There are characters and characters, but now and then there comes along a beautiful, flawless being whom we may worship but never know. She was more beautiful than ever—more reserved too, this evening, I thought. This made it scarcely possible for me to pass the little frivolities of

local happenings with her. But she told me in her sweet, dignified way, of their school triumphs and graduation. She was describing the Corcoran Art Gallery when I heard Thesis laugh out and exclaim,

"Ned, what do you think Tem is saying about you?"

"That I am in love with something, but don't know myself what," I replied.

They both gave a laugh in unison.

"My exact words," cried the Blind Man.

After leaving the Blind Man at his home, Miss Cynthia met me with a note at my own gate. I had not told the Blind Man that I had sent a basket of all kinds of flowers gathered from Miss Cynthia's collection in the flower garden to Blythewood that afternoon. I had sent the huge basket to both of them, and another of strawberries—old Wash's best pickings. I had hoped Thesis would answer the note. Instead it was from Bernice.

"Women are queer creatures, Miss Cynthia," I said.

"Yes, they are daughters of men," she remarked.

ART IN NATURE.

THE trees are but the brushes of the sky
Dipped deep in green. Above, a canopy
No mortal yet hath painted. From hill below
To where the purp'ling rivers flow,
From thousand-tinted sky and cloud,
Where light and shadows laugh aloud,
From shifting shade o'er sea and land—
O painting from the Master's hand!

CHAPTER IV.

THAT man but half lives who does not live on a farm. He may see more things in a city, perhaps; that is, see more superficial things, superficially. But if he grow, he must grow from the ground up. There is a Greek myth about a man who gathered renewed strength every time he fell on his mother earth. The Greek myths were the concentrated wisdom of the Greek ages.

You may figure it out, but nothing good or great ever came out of those places where men wall out the sunlight and air and call them cities. Many of the good and great are there. I am not denying that, but they did not grow there—they went there after they had their growth. And they got their growth from the soil. For the principal element of soil-growth is strength, earnestness and honesty, and the soil-children who have them always succeed.

It takes a splendid combination of good parts to make a complete success, but I have never known a dead earnest and honest man or woman yet to be a dead failure. There is something so God-like in it that even if misdirected they half succeed by sheer weight of their moral force. Prayer is the ripened fruit of faith—of earnestness. A man believing there is a God, and earnestly praying to Him to be better and greater, will be better and greater whether there be a God or not. I do not mean great in the ordinary accepted sense—intellectually, brilliantly great—for that depends more on the honesty and earnestness of one's ancestors than on oneself; but in the true sense—honestly, nobly great. Neither do I mean to intimate that there is no God; for I was not born in a cocoanut shell, but under the studded canopy of His own home, where I have only to look up and see Him. And I thank Him daily that, like Sallust of my school days, He has placed my head where I would not, like the ox, have to look downward to the grass, but where I might always look upward to Him.

And so, as I was saying, a man but half lives who does not live on a farm. There he may always look up, and his view will be unclouded by smoke and unobscured by walls. O, the glory and beauty of it!

And a farm is but half a farm which has not its bunch of Jersey cows. There is a locust thicket in my blue-grass pasture where, in the heat of the day, the cows love to lie down and assimilate the garnered herbage for which they have labored all the morning. If brain-workers would only do like cows: gather up their material as they walk around in the fields and the woods and assimilate it while resting—do their best work, their assimilative work, as they rested, they—well, they would have more brains! For no man has ever done really good work until he has lain down in the grass with some of God's creatures and learned of himself by watching them. It is thought that makes brain, and no great brain-worker was ever a great reader of others.

This locust thicket with the cows scattered through and in it, lying amid the flowers and grasses like fawn-colored nymphs in a sea of

blue and emerald, is an exquisite picture from nature's brush. The Southdowns are there, too, in a flock; and lying in the further end of it, viewed as I see them from my resting-place in the grass, they are not unlike that stream of white light which painters sometimes throw into their pictures to set off the darker shades.

The tangled and brambled wood is the background, the blue and still more faintly blue hills, beyond, the softened and subdued perspective; while on the living canvas the fainter shadows flit about like sweet, sad smiles dropped from the lips of the passing night, and, Naiad like, await in their dark, cool caves, till she pass, to rejoin her again.

A picture on canvas once painted is forever fixed. Not so with the one which nature paints. I have been there at all times of the day, and, though always beautiful, it is never the same. It is darker and fuller of shadows in the morning and evening. At noon it is lit up with the softened splendor of a light which, falling through feathery leaf and clusters of locust blossoms, is more a refined glory,

a soft radiance, the halo of heaven's smile passed through sieves of crystal, than it is light. The perspective of a painted picture stares one in the face day after day, with a fixed sameness. But O, the ever-changing tints in the distant hills around this one!

In the morning, tint after tint or varying blue—from deepest blue in the gloaming of sunrise, and the brown-blue of the fuller light of morn, to the purpling-blue of sunset—changing from blue to blue-brown and from blue-brown to blue, measuring their moods with the progress of the sun, changing their gowns, like a queenly woman, morning, noon and night, to catch the eye of him, their lover lord, until, as night comes on, they throw over their head and shoulders a silvery sheen—laces of starlight—and in a bodice of red and a gown of purple they meet and kiss him in the twilight. And above shine the stars, the stars of locust blossoms; and beneath, the never-dying, never-changing splendor of that grass which is the emblem of immortality.

And the cows—I love to lie down with them, right in their midst and right down on the

grass—for, as I said, if one really wishes to learn something, one must lie down with nature. And so when I really wish to think, to solve the problems that confront me daily, I go out to that cool and shady spot and talk it over with the cows.

I love to talk to the cows—and to Miss Cynthia. But I believe I'd rather talk to the cows than to Miss Cynthia, because they never ask any questions.

Besides, though I love a horse and all others of our domestic animals, still it is my deliberate opinion that the Jersey cow is the most perfect animal that lives. From the big, tender and thoughtful eyes, which give so much character to her clean-cut, dished and bony face, to the dainty switch that graces her tapering tail, there is not another animal that walks the earth with more grace and beauty, and combining it all with so much usefulness.

Men may gamble on horses, but there is no temptation about a Jersey cow. All her paths lead to sweetness, contentment, honest living and broader thinking. The sight of the clean, white dairy, pungent with the odor of

ripening milk and cooling cream in the darkling waters, is itself a sermon on holy living; while the tinkling of the tiny streams that purl around the gold-stamped tray of butter is the music that accompanies it.

Follow her into the fields, and unless your ancestors have thrown off on you terribly in the formation of your head, you will see life in all its beauty and truth, you will grow better and broader each day as you learn that the universe is infinitely immense, God infinitely great, and you infinitely small. But the greatest lesson she teaches is the lesson Americans especially most need to-day. I mean the wisdom of growing slow but sure; the unexcelled policy of declaring small but regular dividends—the triumphant business sense of basing your business on the honest needs of mankind. True, you do not win forty dollars by her to-day and lose it to-morrow, but she gives you daily a pound of butter worth that many cents, and while you are gathering in the many "mickles that make the muckle," she and the grass-roots are making your land rich.

The oldest of my cows is Content,—Content of Lynwood; that's the name of my farm. In talking I always address my remarks to Content chiefly, because she is a fine listener.

"Content," I said, "this is a more beautiful picture than one sees on canvas, isn't it? And let me tell you another thing: you living cows are more beautiful than all the dead statues in the world.

"It makes me smile, Content, to see people going across the ocean to see works of art when they might walk out into a meadow and see such a picture as this. Going across the sea to rave over broken-armed and broken-hearted Venuses, dug out of Pompeii, copied after Greek Aphrodites, dug out of heaven knows where, when all they would have to do is to tap one of you with a cluster of locust blossoms and make you stand up, straighten your beautiful and silver-golden sheen, to see the most perfect statue in the world.

"Stand up, Content! There now, let's compare you with the Venus.

"Broad hips (they say that's a strong point with the Venus)—why 'twould take a yard-

stick to measure yours. And ankles—(that's another boast of the Venus)—well, I can span yours with my thumb and middle finger. Now I am told these are the two strong points about the Venuses, Content. If so, they are not in it with you.

"And in looks—that sinewy health and lack of surplus flesh—why no Spartan maid is your equal. Your eyes? They are great, still, calm lakes of poetry. Not a line about you that is not a line of beauty. And from the tapering turn of your little curving horns to the big golden quarters of an udder tucked well up behind and well out in front, I am willing again to declare that no Venus—hi—ho—but where was I at?

"Ah, yes, on the subject of art. And that reminds me, Content, of the great amount of sham and fraud that is practiced under that name. It is with art as it is with incomprehensible poetry—people rave over it who have no conception of what they are raving about. They go on about the Milos and Apollos and the other naked things they happen to see, when their artistic calibre is about large

enough to comprehend the flaming posters in the village blacksmith shop, announcing the coming of a company of soubrettes in a melodrama of faded hosiery.

"And it is the same way about music. It is fashionable and quite the proper thing for us to applaud all the vague, visionary and uncertain notes dished into one piece and passed off on a suffering audience as classical music. But when they would touch the human heart they must go back to the sweet old heart-music—the tunes of our childhood.

"It is life that I love, Content—life, not death. And so a Jersey cow is more beautiful to me than a Venus, a graceful brood mare than Diana, and I would not exchange my saddle-horse for all the Apollos that ever were mounted on a pedestal.

"It is life that I love, Content—life, not death. And suppose these statues have perfect limbs and straight noses and beautiful faces. Suppose they do look as if they were about to speak or about to move ; whenever I look up into their eyes and see the big sunken holes in the marble there, I am shocked and

disappointed. Throughout all the ages no one has ever been able to put a single spark in the only place the light was needed—'the window of the soul.'

"Ah, Content, turn again your big, calm eyes on me; they make me satisfied with life."

THE THRASHER.

GLINT of brown through the shadowy wood,
Flash of wing where the shadows stood,
Opening notes which upward rise,
Burst of song to the smiling skies.

CHAPTER V.

THERE was a burst of flute-notes from the thickest of the locust trees near me. It was a brown thrasher, the first I had seen. But I was not surprised, for I knew his way of arriving suddenly from the South in the early Spring days and beginning housekeeping as soon as he could unpack his things. One day there would not be a thrasher anywhere. The next day they would all be there. They seem to come in the night and in flocks.

To-day he was celebrating his arrival with a song which, though not varied or so splendid as that of his cousin, the mocking-bird, or even of the wood-thrush, yet it was full of sweetness and homely melody.

Beginning it on the lowest branches of the trees, he went up from limb to limb, slipping through branches and emerald-sheen leaves

like a brown song-shaft from a locust bow. Then, as his spirit arose to its highest joy-mark, he sat on the topmost twig of a blossoming branch, and, with his head thrown up and back, as if to catch inspiration from above, he poured out his one triumphant, bursting strain to the unseen stars.

It was music and incense—the music of the bird, the wild incense of the locust blossom.

O, Nature is all right. She knows the sweet things of life. And those who serve her, whose mistress she is, and whose making she is mother to, these always bring to her their sweetest tributes.

I watched the bird in a dreamy sort of pleasure. His bright, yellow eyes were ablaze with inspiration. His long, graceful tail, that had before stood out indifferently, now hung artistically down. With his head thrown back, he was oblivious to all surroundings, singing, not in arias and in operas, as his more gifted cousins might have done, but a sweet, soothing tune which, to me, was not unlike an old-time negro melody.

The arrow-shaped dots on his breast, cor-

responding to the heart-shaped ones on the breast of the wood-thrush, shone very distinctly in the sunlight. The two white bands on his partially-extended wings, mingled with the rufous and red-brown above, encircled him with a halo of light, and clasped him as a rainbow girdles the waist of a russet-red cloud at sunset.

It was the first love-song of Spring.

"The operas of the mocking-bird are sweet, old fellow," I thought aloud, "but these childhood melodies, these simple songs of other days, they get into our hearts." When he ceased, there was that silence on Nature's boards which follow when one of her children has soothed all the others with the glory of his genius. No demonstration, no wild applause, no flowers save those already around him, no encores. Everything seemed to wish to be quiet and think—to take on life inwardly, and to grow.

The fragrance of the rich perfume from the heavily-scented blossoms has lost its strength, as it reaches me, and floats in a delicately sweet odor along with the waves that ripple

across the foot-high wheat in the adjoining field. These same waves have tossed a shower of blossoms down and scattered them over the broad, silvery backs of the resting herd. Resting in one sense, but if Miss Cynthia were here now she would not think that any of them had lost her cud.

"This is an ideal day to talk to cows," I went on. "My walk across the pasture has made me tired, and this grass is most delightfully cool and restful. And that reminds me, Content, and you other cows, Kalita and Lass o' Lowrie's, and Belle Williamson, and Lady Feronia, and others," I said apologetically, with a broad sweep of my hand, because I thought they had begun to eye me suspiciously for listening more to the thrasher than to them, "I am peculiarly discontented to-day. A young man in love, or who imagines he is,—and it's all the same, Content,—always is.

"But tell me, did you ever see a queenlier woman than Bernice Philips? Now, I don't mean a prettier woman nor a lovelier one (for I know of one lovelier one, ladies), but I mean a handsomer, queenlier one. Tall and

straight and graceful as that young walnut flirting there with that stout yellow locust. Queenlier than the feathery elm that stands in the rich meadow bottom, and haughtier, aye, Content—that's the word—and prouder than the white oak that looks down on the rest of the forest. And colder—it is true, Content—than the frost-painted sides of the silvery sycamore, when Winter has stripped her of her leaves and left her to match in garishness the snow beneath. But queenly—Content, queenly—that's the name.

"'Infatuated,' did you say? Well, perhaps that's what I am. That's what I want you cows to help me decide. Tell me which you think it is—infatuation or love? For there's a big difference in the two. Ah! I see you understand. One is passion, the other is principle. One is body, the other is soul. One is fire, leaping through the eyes to set the heart aglow; the other is sunshine, flooding the windows of the soul with sweet and wholesome light. Like the fire, one will quickly burn up all within its reach, even the home of sunshine, the home of love, and leave only

the ashes of regret behind. Like the sunshine, the other will come day after day, always fresh and sweet, always pure and strengthening and wholesome. It makes a great difference, Content, which one we marry on.

"It came about in this way, Content. I don't mind telling you cows, because I know you will not tell anybody.

"She is Colonel Philips's daughter, you know; the same that is my neighbor and has that handsome home and farm. Don't you remember the day when you cows acted so badly and broke over into his pasture where the rich orchard grass grew with the clover? Not that I am throwing up past manners to you all—I don't believe any of us should do that, it tends to harden us so—but I just wish to fix it in your mind. Because I've known some people to think that farms and houses and orchards had a good deal to do in deciding whether the thing was infatuation or love.

"Bernice,—of course, you all know her,—ever since I can remember, ever since I could toss her on her pony and pace her up the pike, she was haughty and queenly even then.

"I never tossed her but once. I remember it distinctly. She was ten and I was twelve. Do you remember the Tom Hal pacing pony her father gave her? That evening I had burned the sedge-grass on the hill of the white locust fields, shooting rabbits as they ran out. I had killed two and was trudging home immensely proud. Her saddle had slipped at the lane, and she was standing on the ground holding her pony and looking most queenlily perplexed as I came by. It was nearly dark and she was two miles from home, yet she showed no signs of gladness that I had come just in time to help her out of her trouble.

"'Hello, Bernice! you are in a pretty fix. How did it happen?' and I went to work to unbuckle the big double girth and adjust the saddle to the round back of the little fat pacer.

"'O, it's not so bad,' she said, a little less humbly than I thought she might under the circumstances. 'I knew somebody would come along and fix it.'

"'Well it's lucky I came along when I did, for it's nearly dark already. Now give me your foot an' I'll toss you in the saddle.'

"'You are very kind and I thank you so much. But I'll get into the saddle myself, and'—haughtily—'I don't give my foot to gentlemen.'

"'O, ho! Miss Haughty, when did you get so grown?'

"I laughed teasingly, and I caught her by the waist as she was climbing in, and pulled her provokingly back.

"'I'll take a kiss to pay me for all I've done,' I laughed, as I tried to kiss her.

"She turned on me indignantly.

"'No you won't; and let me tell you, Ned Ballington, if ever you put your hands on me again, I'll—I'll—'

"'Well give me your hand, then, Miss Philips, and if you don't do that, then just get on your pacing pony any way you can. I wish now I'd let you fix your saddle, too.'

"She laughed gayly, sprang into the saddle, adjusted the stirrup to her foot and looked down at me with a triumphant smile in her dark blue eyes.

"'Always want folks runnin' after you an' bowin' down to you like you was a queen,' I

went on, bitterly, 'an' when they do you a favor you seem to think it's just your natural dues an' you don't thank 'em a bit.'

"She smiled provokingly and tossed her curls.

"'The meanes' folks in the world,' I went on, 'is them that ain't thankful for what they get.'

"'Now all this, Mister Ballington,' she said, with an ironical emphasis on the Mister, 'all this is because I wouldn't let you kiss me.'

"I flushed hotly under the truth of this.

"'You ain't a bit better than Thesis,' I exclaimed, 'and not half so good.'

"By that I saw that I had stepped on dangerous ground. I had touched the one weak spot in her character.

"'Well, do me the kindness to go and waste Miss Thesis's time discussing it,' she exclaimed, freezingly. 'Mine is valuable, and Sappho and I are going home.'

"She started off, leaving me utterly unhorsed and miserable.

"It is one of the queer things in our make-up, Content, that the unattainable has only

to put on the helmet of Diana of the Ephesians to make us fall down in worship. And yet if the stars really fell to the earth, and we might gather them as we do daisies, it would not be long ere we'd be classing them with fire-flies.

"When she rode off in her haughty and queenly way, I thought she was never more beautiful.

"'Bernice!' I called, shamedly. 'Please stop.'

"She drew up her pony with a little gesture of impatient non-compliance.

"'Bernice,' I said softly, walking up to the side of her pony, 'I was meaner than a dog. Please take one of my rabbits. You are so pretty.'

"She flushed in a pleased way and said, 'O, well, since it'll please you, Ned, just tie the thing to my saddle. But I'm not particularly fond of rabbits.'

"In a few minutes she had cantered off in the twilight, while I—I had laid my first tribute on the altar of infatuation."

THESIS.

A SOUTHERN woman—ay, what worth implied,
What loyal lines of true nobility!
Product of pride and sweet humility.
Grace that hath flowered and long defied
The red-rude hands when other graces died.
Modesty born of higher laws and free,
Spirit as placid as the unruffled sea
From coarser winds its destiny denied.

From cultured acres of ancestral worth
There springest now the lily of their soil,
The blossom of the land that gave thee birth,
The alabaster box of precious oil.
Live, that the beauty of your bloom may grow,
Till all the world a sweeter fragrance know.

CHAPTER VI.

"NOW, there is her cousin, Thesis, Content—the Colonel's niece—whose parents died when she was an infant. Unlike his brother, her father had no farms and herds and orchards, and when he died Thesis was taken to her uncle's home to live. I am telling you this that you may know all the facts, Content, and why no blue-grass farm will come with Thesis's dower.

"You have seen her a hundred times, Content, with her sweet, dimpled face, and great, sad, thoughtful eyes, and her quiet, unselfish ways. And her eyes—such wonderful eyes, Content.

"Thesis; you have seen her, Content; she who shuns where Bernice seeks; who waits where Bernice walks; who gives where Bernice gets."

Uoli—a-e-oli-noli-nol-a-e-oli-lee!

I sprang from the grass in joyful excitement when the opening notes of this well-known flute-song floated like clear music-bubbles across my sea of air. I had heard it too often not to know the luscious, liquid, ripened melody that came in the early Spring with the penetrating force of clarion-notes from a silver bugle at the lips of Fame.

"The wood-thrush, cows! Two weeks ahead of time. Hurrah for an early Spring and a sweet Summer!"

I looked cautiously around me to see whence came the music, for I knew the modest, dainty and aristocratic ways of this graceful, retiring bird, and I did not wish to play the groundling in the pit to the classic utterances of this sweet singer.

Of all the thrush family, except the hermit thrush, I knew this fellow was the shyest and least often seen. Unlike his cousins, the robin, thrasher and mocking-bird, he is heard more than he is seen. And unlike the thrasher, who but a half hour ago entertained us from the loftiest top of a locust branch, I knew I

must look for this poet of the woods under the lowest limbs, where the green leaves close over him in the thick splendor of an emerald sky, making a solitude of sweetness for this rare singer, before he would give us his heart-song.

It took me ten minutes to locate him, so securely had he selected his bower, and so nearly the color of his brown back was that of his retreat. He was sitting on a lower limb, close to the body of a black-gum, around and above which a wild grapevine had twisted and twined, and though its leaves had not yet put out, it made a bower almost impenetrable.

There was not the least effort in his singing. Unlike the thrasher's, it seemed to pour from his golden, reedy beak, as a silver stream leaps from the bronzed lip of a statue of Pan, above a fountain. And, indeed, the entire bird seemed a fountain of music. His white throat and breast, dotted with heart-shaped spots, was the silvery fountain of the pool, over which darker bubbles floated. His little bronzed body was the statue above it; his

bright eyes gleamed like sunbeams in the pool, and from his yellow, golden beak there poured a stream of music with the distinctive, bell-like chimes of a pure, cold stream tumbling into a deep pool of resting water. Listening, I scarcely knew whether to call it a chime of silver bells, the notes of a rare stringed instrument, or the tinkling of a mountain spring over the face of a bluff of brown Tennessee marble.

He ceased as suddenly as he began. Then, like the modest creature he was, he slipped off into the darker forest without waiting for any applause.

It was some time before I wanted to talk again. After such music one wishes to commune with one's own soul. But presently I was aroused by Content ceasing to chew her cud and looking at me fixedly. I started because she had assumed the exact attitude of Miss Cynthia just before she asks me a question. Fearing she might, I went on.

"Oh, yes, as I was saying, Content, there is her cousin, Thesis. It was the occasion of my fifteenth birthday, and my mother had

given me a birthday party. I was just at that age when, like a newly-fledged insect, I was quite a bit larger than I would ever be again. I had got mad with Bernice for some of her slights and haughtiness—peculiarly exasperating this time—and so had asked Thesis to go with me. She was ten then, and such a sweet, unselfish being as one might only meet in paradise.

"How delighted she was! How her eyes shone, and how gladly she consented! But the next day—I remember it so well—she walked across the field to Lynwood, and when I saw her she was wearing a little sunbonnet, and beckoning to me with berry-stained fingers to come out to our playground under the grapevine arbor.

"'Hello, Thesis! what have you come so early for, before I was dressed for the party? I was goin' to come after you, in the afternoon, you know.'

"'Oh, Ned, don't—don't tease me to-day when I've come so far to do right. I'm in earnest, Ned.'

"'Of course you are—you are always in earnest—the earnestest thing I ever saw.'

"'But very, very earnest this time, Ned.'

"Here she shook her head in that funny little way she had when she was very positive about anything.

"'Ned, I'm—I'm—I'm too little to go—you must go with Bernice to the party.'

"'Too little! Stand up by my side, Thesis Philips. Just to my shoulders. You're just right. All married people, that's married right, fit just about that way. The bride always comes up to the groom's shoulder.'

"'Oh, Ned, how can you talk so! I—I—I b'leeve I'll go home. Oh, Ned, I can't go with you. I'm in earnest.'

"'Thesis, let me tell you something. I'm in earnest, too. Ned Ballington will no longer be tampered with. His manly feelings will no longer be lacerated.'

"I had got that speech out of my first novel—a cheap one I'd read up in the hay-loft and hid in the cracks of the barn when not reading. The occasion was where the hero swore he'd die before he'd further submit to the slights of the heartless heroine.

"'No,' I continued pompously, 'they will

no longer be lacerated. He ain't built that way. He's made up his mind to quit lovin' that proud, mean cousin of yours, an'—an'—Thesis, I'm goin' to——'

"She looked tantalizingly sweet in her white apron, her sunbonnet awry, and her curls peeping out from under it. She looked at me so innocently and yet so sadly that I stopped, blushed and hung my head.

"'Ned, ain't you ashamed of yourself not to love Bernice?' and her big eyes brought me to scorn. Then she stooped, plucked a daisy and began to pull it, petal by petal, apart. She was shyly looking at me from the corner of her eyes, and I saw a half-concealed laugh on her lips as she began to tell her fortune in the flower. 'He loves me little,—he loves me—he loves me not,' she said.

"'But I do love you,' I said, 'I am goin' to love you instead of Bernice, Thesis,—daisy or no daisy.'

"'Oh, Ned, you mustn't—you mustn't—you mustn't think of that. Oh, no—no—no! Ned, how can you?' And she shook her head again in that funny, solemn way she had.

"'But I am,—an' I'm goin' to marry you jus' as soon as you get big enough—see if I don't! I'll spite that mean Bernice, if I die for it.'

"She put her berry-stained fingers over my mouth.

"'Ned! Ned! Hush!'

"'An' you shall live in my big house with me, an' it will be yours an' mine,' I said.

"'Ned! Ned! Hush—h-u-s-h!'

"'An' we'll not even invite Bernice to see us—jus' let her die, the mean old maid that she is. An' nobody'll live here, Thesis, but jus' you an' me—nobody!'

"She shook her head very solemnly and quietly.

"'Oh, yes, Thesis, an' we'll play around all day, an' love nobody but jus' each other, an' drink cream clabber all day long, if we want to, an' have pancake fritters every night; Thesis, just think of it,—every night,—for supper!'

"She still continued to shake her head and to look away.

"'Oh, Ned, how sweet of you, — how lovely!'

"'An'—an', Thesis, I'll ride you on the wheelbarrow all the time when we ain't eatin' pancakes, an' when we ain't doin' that, we'll hunt for guinea-nests an' jacky-worms.'

"But she only shook her head the more positively and sadly, though she murmured, 'How sweet, how lovely!'

"'I tell you, Thesis,' I said, getting quite positive myself, 'jus' since we've been talkin' I've found it all out. I've found out I love you, an' I don't love her, an' I love you harder'n—harder'n—well harder'n anything in the worl', an' I love you right now—Charley-on-the-spot, red leather, bargain done forever, now an' forever. Amen! Thesis, be my sweetheart till we get big enough to marry.'

"'Oh, Ned, how lovely of you! But—I—I—can't! An' I've come 'way over here to tell you I can't. An' I can't even go with you this evenin'.'

"'Look here, Thesis Philips, are you gettin' stuck up, too? Is the whole Philips family goin' back on Ned Ballington? Well, Miss Thesis, let me tell you right now, the nex'

time Edward G. Ballington offers his company to one of the Philips family, also his hand, an' his heart an' home, an' his pancakes an' clabber an' e-v-e-r-y-thing he's got, you'll be catchin' jacky-worms in January — there now!'

"And I turned on my heels indignantly.

"'Oh, Ned, you don't understan'. Please don't. Oh, don't get mad at me!' and she clung to my coat-sleeve.

"This was what I wanted. I struck an offended, stage attitude, such as I'd read about in my novel, and said, freezingly:

"'Edward G. Ballington, Miss Philips, don't have to run all over the country for girls to go with him to his own party. A gentleman, madam, never gives his word but once, neither does he take but one refusal. Therefore, be cautious how thou speakest the word that may blight thy life forever.'

"She looked at me with positive admiration in her eyes. I could see I was playing a winning hand, and I rummaged around for some other scenes from my novel.

"'But tell me, Miss Philips—hist, madam—

tell me, is there another man in it? Is it Joe Forde? If so, just show him to me. Let me but get a glimpse of his craven countenance,' and I felt in an imaginary hip-pocket for the weapon a Tennessee gentleman always carries for such an emergency.

"She held on to my arm. 'Oh, Ned, don't shoot anybody—that'll be murder!'

"'Well I won't, Thesis, if—if—if you say not. But let not the craven that would ruthlessly destroy my happiness cross my path! Let him keep the wide ocean between us! The man don't live that can steal the jewel of Edward G. Ballington's life an' go unwhipped of justice!'

"'Oh, Ned, how beautiful,—how beautiful you talk! Oh, I wish I could—but I can't. You must say all that to Bernice.'

"'Miss Philips' — freezingly—'allow Edward G. Ballington to bid you good evenin', an' to politely inform you that the stars will turn backward ere he speak these words to your fair cousin. Allow me to bid you——'

"'Oh, Ned, don't go that way. I can't go with you. It'll be selfish and wrong, Ned.'

"'You won't go with me, Miss Philips? An' when did you get so grown, pray? Ain't we been raised together, an' played together all our lives? Why when you was three years old an' jus' could toddle, you was running around after me all over the place. Zounds! madam, I couldn't seek a cloistered nook to engage in silent meditation but you'd be there, climbing all over my lap and cryin' if I didn't let you pull all the buttons out of my shirt-front.'

"'Oh, Ned, don't—please don't! I was so little then!'

"'Nor could I retire to the restful quietude of my chamber, nor follow the chase in the deep, dark woods, nor lead my warriors to battle, without accountin' to you first, or else have your screams and female lamentations arouse the whole neighborhood.'

"'Oh, Ned, don't!'

"'Yes, Madam Growny, an' have you forgotten the day you was three years old an' they brought you to spend the day with me?'

"'Oh, Ned, please don't; I was so little then, and I didn't know no better. Oh, Ned, please don't tell that!'

"'An' I broke myself down swingin' you all day, an' climbin' the barn-loft to get you pigeon-eggs, an' rollin' you in the wheelbarrow all day, like you was some queen and I was a—was—a—ah—a—houri, yes, a houri, that waits on a queen.'

"'Ah, you were glad enough to go with me then. Well, when I'd broke myself down trundlin' you aroun' I went to sleep in my trundle-bed, while they was washin' the smut off your face you got by tryin' to look at the sun through a smoked glass an' looking through the wrong side of it. An' I went to sleep in the trundle-bed, as I was sayin'——'

"'Oh, Ned, don't—don't,' and she tried to put her hand over my mouth again.

"'Yes, I will remind you of it, Miss Philips; you were not ashamed of Edward G. Ballington then.'

"'Oh, Ned, how can you?'

"'An' when I woke up, who was in that little bed with me but the dainty Miss Philips, that is, in her clean bib, an' sound asleep with both arms around my neck, an' I was so mad I——'

"'Oh, Ned, yes, you did; you bit me--you know you did.'

"'Yes, I did bite you. I couldn't get rid of you any other way.'

"'I was so little I didn't know no better, Ned.'

"'You know better now—know so much better that you won't even go with me to my own party,' and I jerked indignantly away from her. And then I saw I had overdone it —overacted my part. When I looked at her again she was sitting on the grass, sobbing bitterly.

"I went up and sat down by her. I had never felt that way before. Now I know a man is never so young and never so old that he does not stand subdued and awed before a woman's tears.

"To him they are a mystery—the mystery of a birth. An unsolved problem—the problem of a death. For they come with the sorrowing pain of a birth and the silent wonder of death.

"Unfathomed lakes that sleep in the mysterious mountains of the mind until some strange upheaval of the soul forces them to burst their

channels and roll down its sides, refreshing, moistening, renewing that life that lives within.

"And they are always new to him—he never gets used to them. Beings from another world, a world that is not a part of his world and which he cannot understand. Stars, strange, wandering stars, that have fallen from their sky. Outcast angels, upon whose robes some spot has been found, and so forced over the jasper walls and out of the temple of light in their nakedness and penitence. Forced from the realms of the Invisible, to be seen and scorned and to suffer in the kingdom of the Visible. Culprits of light, crowned yet with the rainbow of their hope, and in the garments of their immortality, driven by an angel with a flaming sword from the garden of their Eden to wander as outcasts in the world. Salt tear waves from a Spirit sea, breaking on the desert beach, where only Sorrow sits enthroned, and bringing on their crests the wrecked pleasure crafts of every joy, the shattered galleons of every hope.

"And woe is that man who is not touched by

them! Let him know that he is no longer a man and has no right to wear man's mantle—that 'he should be sent back to the mint of nature, and there reissued out of baser metal as a counterfeit on humanity.'

"They should touch him as nothing earthly may. They should take him away from himself and the world of himself, and in a moment he should stand at the threshold of another world—an invisible world—where the spirit is supreme and the body unknown. That world of tenderness and light; of seeing things altogether, plainly, clearly, sweetly; where the air is the breath of God, and its light but the light of His eye, the stars but his poems writ in the sky, and its water but His own tears, where those who drink shall not perish, neither shall they thirst any more.

"All—all of that is in the rounded sphere of one tear from a holy woman's eye.

"I sat down beside her. Something funny rose in my throat as she continued to sob.

"'Thesis, I'm so sorry. If you'll hush, you may have my new pony and I'll send you a valentine.

"'An' the new white kitten I found yesterday in the hayloft, Thesis. Oh, for mercy sake, h-u-s-h. It nearly kills us men to see you women cry.'

"The sobbing hushed, indeed — it was changed to a flood of tears.

"'Thesis! Thesis! Please hush. They'll think I've bit you again, an' jus' think of the whippin' I'll get. Think of me, Thesis;—not for heaven's sake, but for my sake. Hush!'

"This appeal to her unselfishness was too much. The tears ceased. She wiped her eyes on her apron, but continued to sob.

"'Ned, you—you—don't understand. You must go with Bernice. Pro—prom—promise me, Ned, you'll go. That you'll love her an' not me, an'—an' an' I'll quit cryin'. Oh—hoo—oo!'

"'Jimminy, Thesis! I'll promise you anything if you'll only hush. It makes me nervous. I feel like I've swallowed a wiggling minnow an' that somebody has—has—touched a funny-bone in my gizzard. Oh, lordy, do hush!'

"She wiped her eyes on her apron. I drew

a great sigh of relief. 'Oh my,—Thesis! I'd rather dream I was fallin' off a housetop. I'd rather wake up o' nights a-seein' things. I'd rather a cat would suck my breath. I'd—I'd —rather anything than to see you cry!'

"This brought a rippling, little, sunshiny smile into her eyes.

"Then she said solemnly, 'Ned, it's right. We must give up what we love to others.'

"'Phew! Well, that's a corker, sure. But what put that into your head?'

"'Nothin', Ned; it was already there.'

"'Look here, Thesis, that's nonsense. I love you best. I've just found it out. You are so lovable—how can I help it? An' I won't give you up.'

"She shook her head. 'We must give up our things to others—give up to others, Ned. It makes them happy.'

"'Oh, no, Thesis, not when it comes to sweethearts. We don't give up our sweethearts to others. That don't work worth a shuck.'

"'But it will, Ned, yes, it will—even in sweethearts—because—because we love 'em,

you know, an' the more we give up the better it makes us; because—because we love 'em, you know.'

"I saw two tears start into her eyes again. She jumped up quickly.

"'Good-by, Ned, good-by. I must go. Kiss me good-by, Ned, and don't be mad at me, but I can't—it's right—I can't, you know.'

"It was an innocent, sweet little face that was turned up to me, and there were tears in her eyes.

"'Kiss me good-by, Ned. Oh, don't be mad at me. I'm only doing right.'

"Then I discovered something else about man's nature. A kiss stolen is a star; given, it becomes only a puny meteor of iron and clay that has fallen to the earth.

"I turned on my heel, fool that I was, and —threw a rock at a jay-bird instead.

"When I looked again I saw a little white, sorrowful and subdued sunbonnet crawling under the pasture-bars and then flying across the fields.

"I don't know how it was, but that evening I went with Bernice to the party."

Thesis! Thesis! Thesis! Thesis!
Don't you love her? Don't you love her? Don't you love her?
Angelic! Angelic! Angelic! Angelic!
S-w-e-e-t one! S-w-e-e-t one! S-w-e-e-t one! S-w-e-e-t one!

I jumped up from the grass with a laugh. "Good heavens, cows! Did you ever hear a bird speak more plainly than that mocking-bird did?"

A BIRD BIOGRAPHER.

FOR her the hills with blue emboss'd,
And kerchief'd fields cross country toss'd,
And baby clouds that languid lie
Amid the drapery of the sky ;
And lanes that lead where lovers meet
To lips that laugh—and, laughing greet
Fair lover lips with kisses sweet—
The girl that loves a horse.

For her the sunset's trailing tress
Fair laid on neck of loveliness ;
And new-moon pearl'd amid the trees—
Diana gemmed for such as these.
And lisp of night-winds prattling low
Where roses bloom and lilies blow,
Sweet mem'ries of a maid I know—
The girl that loves a horse.

And health lies in her dimpled cheek
So plump and pink it seems to speak,
While joy within her eyes doth make
Reflected rainbows in a lake.

And sweet contentment, shepherdess
Of all her flocks of happiness,
Shall guide her and forever bless
The girl that loves a horse.

CHAPTER VII.

FOR a while I forgot everything else, listening to this prince of singers. It is so easy to set the music of a mocking-bird to words. Only let him sing, and it is a barren imagination, indeed, that does not at once blossom and ripen into a harvest of words—sheaves of song and sentiment, granaries of golden thought. For his music touches the very fountains of life and starts all its springs anew. And that is where the mocking-bird is a great poet, for only great poets can do that.

To-day he seemed verily to sing a biography of Thesis. And what a biography it was! Lucky Thesis! Who among earth's greatest can say that his life has been told in an opera where the singer was the soul of a bird, and the music the flute-notes of heaven?

"Thesis! — Thesis! — Thesis!—don't you

love her? Don't you love her?" he went on, and, having caught my attention with his startling prelude, he began in a gentle narrative to tell me all about her. And he sang it as plainly as if he had preached it in words—her innocent beauty, her sweet unselfishness, her great conceptions of right, her lofty idea of sacrificing even love for another's happiness, her nature as open as the full, red rose that blooms and knows not why, her soul as transparent as the tiny drop in the heart of it.

As he sang I followed, and the words were woven around his song as easily as star-sparks troop after the sun, and as naturally as the wreaths of the milky-way twine their great, golden tendrils around the pillars of the sky.

Ah! but a mocking-bird is an artist. And so he began in baby prattling to paint her, the wee, toddling bundle of unselfishness I knew in the long ago. So little and helpless—an orphan on the world—and yet so strong already in character and soul. I followed him as he carried her through her school-days, with me a silent worshipper, to her college-days, when she and Bernice were away at

college, and my funny, overdrawn, romantic letters would come to her now and then. On, on, down to the present, a quiet little woman in her uncle's house, cheering all, helping all, loving all,—the soul of truth and gentleness and sweetness—until it seemed to me, as he painted in lines of melody the picture of her loveliness, his very song caught a climax of splendor.

"Thesis!—Thesis!—Thesis!—Thesis!" he thundered in a grand finale, "don't you love her?—don't you love her?—don't you love ——"

"Go to, you necromancer!" I jumped up and shouted laughingly. "Go to, you conjuring idiot! Haven't I loved her all these years? Didn't I sing her praises before you were born? You are a fresh one, to be telling me whom to love."

He gave me a quick, startled look, as if he remembered what Shakespeare had said about a poet, a lunatic and a lover, and the next instant he had placed himself on the safe side of the pasture.

It was nearly sundown when I started for

the house. The cows had gone an hour ago. I had seen old Wash let down the bars for them. I had reached the pike and climbed the rail fence. For a moment I sat there, resting. A yellow-breasted wheat-bird, almost a miniature field lark, swung on a tall wheat-stalk and eyed me as he sang his monotonous *chee—chee—che-e-e*. He was a beautiful little fellow, and, from the answering echoes further on in the wheat-field, I knew there would soon be many a little yellow breast hid beneath the sheltering green of the wheat canopy.

One has only to be silent and quiet to get acquainted with birds. They like not noise and the turmoils of life. Step out into the fields and be quiet. Imitate nature in stillness and her peaceful ways, and see how quickly they will come to seek an introduction to you. How soon they learn to know you, and that you mean them no harm. But fret in the least, stir around as if you were working for pay, and see how they will vanish before you like the fairest of childhood dreams before the daylight of after-life.

And so, as I sat upon the fence, almost at

my feet two robust, buxom partridges slipped from under the rails, and, with many a quaint flutter and happy, rollicking look, started as two gay school-girls would run across a lawn, hand in hand, for the next field. Half-way across the pike they saw me, and dropped to the earth as quickly as two brown bullets to the breech of a gun. Had I moved, had I raised a finger, had I frowned even, they had been gone as a bullet before a charge of powder. For a moment they scanned with quick, cunning eyes my face, my posture, the very cut, I thought, of my coat, and the turn of my collar. It must have been satisfactory, for soon one, then the other, slipped away, shyly and slowly at first, then romped it down the road and disappeared in the neighboring field. They had scarcely gotten out of sight before a splendid Baltimore oriole flew over me close down and darted into a spot of ground between me and the shadows of the trees. As it lingered a moment against the sky it looked not unlike a miniature rainbow with wings, or a ray of sunlight shot through glass of old gold and orange.

I was still watching the bird when I heard a clatter of feet coming down the pike, which, from the poetical intonations of the hoof-beats, I had learned to know before, and, knowing it, I instinctively experienced the same pleasure as one who knows the sunshine has burst from a cloud behind him, and the next instant will stream across his path. It was Bernice, taking her evening ride; and, fearless rider that she was, she was exercising her father's saddle sire.

It was a perfect picture—this glorious girl and this glorious horse—pride and pedigree, grace and beauty.

And if there is an animal under heaven more perfect than this horse as he reels his fancy gaits down a sunshiny pike, under the guiding hand of a rider who knows how to ride, I have never seen it. There is something about the proud sire of the graceful single-footer that may not be seen in any other monarch of the paddock. To one who sees beyond the perfected mechanism of flesh and bone, who would read a horse's character from his form and movements as he would read

human characteristics from voice and expression—in other words, to one who really knows the difference between horse and horses—the superb, graceful, intelligent, almost human, saddle-horse is totally different from them all. The moment I see him I feel that there is an indescribable something about him, from the turn of his neat foot and graceful leg to bony head and finely-moulded muscle, that tells me I am looking neither at the sire of runners nor of trotters, nor of pacers. And as for such a creature siring a draught horse, I'd sooner expect to see Hyperion sire a Satyr.

And what is more beautiful than a beautiful woman on a superb horse? And who rides with more grace than the women of Kentucky and Tennessee, in these homes of the saddle-horse?

If I were the parent of a homely girl, I'd start her to riding in her infancy. If that doesn't save her, she is past-grand mistress of homeliness.

Listen! The intonation deepens as it approaches, and the regular measure of the steel-forged cymbals on the smooth pike carried me

back to a school-room, where I first heard the old professor scan, with low, regular cadence, my first line of Virgil. Like a sunbeam she bursts by, gracefully throwing me a smile and a tip from her riding-whip. High up on the horse's withers she sat, quiet, easy and natural, and not a muscle moves, save the slightly undulating sway of a faultless bust, in a blue tailor-made riding-habit, as it imperceptibly maintains its centre of gravity under the rapidly moving horse. The animal's mane flutters in front and ripples like a bright silken banner in the wind, and so high is the crest of the flag-staff and so lofty the arch of the neck that bears it, that in its backward flutters it dallies fondly with the flushed cheeks of the rider as if to screen them from rougher winds. A fore-top that a Circassian maid might envy is divided over a pair of mirthful, luminous and almost human eyes, and coquettes through a silken head-stall with a pair of sensitive ears in delightful and wavy negligee. Away they go—rider and ridden—yet do they appear as one.

The motion of the feet of all other horses is

easily described when we say the runner runs, the trotter trots, and the pacer paces. These are the alphabets of gaits, compared to which the movements of the saddle-horse are the Odes of Anacreon. His forefeet, almost too proud to touch the sordid earth, advance with the disdain, the freedom, the assurance and haughtiness of a splendid young brigade in a double-quick charge at a fort full of cowards, while the quick patter of their hind companions follows with a less erratic stride in military time, and while not so full of youthful hilarity and earth-spurning impatience, appear not unlike the sedate movements of a veteran reserve.

But while you admire, the vision is gone. Adown the pike their heads are on a line, and a little further on, by a slight twist of a firm hand, the graceful machinery is seen suddenly to wheel with military precision for a sharp bend in the road, and for an instant you see a statue against the sky—a statue of Athene riding Pegasus.

At the house I came barely in time to miss Thesis. She had dropped in for a chat with

Miss Cynthia. Now she had slipped away across the same meadow, and under the same bars she had gone through long ago. I had tried to cut across the field to intercept her, but she was too quick for me. That was twice I had tried to see her since she had come home from school, and failed. I had called on them, but only to see Bernice both times. I watched her as she went across the field. Twice I thought I would call to her to come back, but in the little demure way she walked, in the sweet unselfish poise, the unconscious grace of rectitude and right, I could only look and be silent. It was sunset, and the glint of it got into her hair. And then, as she slipped through the bars, there came to me the recollection of other years—the sunset of a memory. She paused to put up the bars, and then, for the first time, she saw me. I took off my hat in a mock heroic way. She threw me a saucy little kiss and ran into the house.

THE JEWEL THAT LIVES.

'TIS rings for the ears of the ladies
As it was in the days of old,
But give me the ring in the soul to sing
A pedigree of gold.
For there's more in blood than in money,
And there's more in brains than in gold,
And jewels are fair in a maiden's hair,
But the jewel that lives is the soul.

Then deck the body in beauty,
With damask and lace of old,
But give me the grace that says on its face
The pedigree is gold.
For there's more in sire than in satin,
And there's more in dam than in gold,
And jewels will do for a year or two,
But the jewel that lives is the soul.

Would you strut in a cheap endeavor,
In trappings of brass and bold?

You'll quit in the race when they set the
pace
If your pedigree is not gold.
For there's more in grit than in grooming,
And there's more in gait than in gold,
And whatever you do you may hold this
true:
The jewel that lives is the soul!

CHAPTER VIII.

OLD Wash and I have a way of sitting out on the veranda, moonlight nights, and talking horse while we smoke. This talking horse habit is dreadful—if it once gets a hold on a man there is no cure for it. I am convinced it is born in some men and never can be got out of them. It is harmless, though, and gives its victims no end of pleasure. It is more soothing than pipes, more comrade-making than war and the tented field, and it draws men into closer bonds than mystic societies and the midnight riding of imaginary goats. Old Wash and I both have a good inheritance of it.

Miss Cynthia dislikes horses—she says they make her nervous ; and she accounts for it on a rule of heredity she has. Miss Cynthia dotes very strongly on heredity. She read it to me once out of a book on that subject, and it was something like this : " A nervous shock experi-

enced by an ancestor will be transmitted, more or less, to the descendants." "That's a true rule, Miss Cynthia," I said, "and I suppose it explains why all women are afraid of mice."

The nervous shock Miss Cynthia experienced was quite severe. I thought anybody, even a woman, could drive old Tom—the surrey horse—so I let Miss Cynthia drive him to Ashwood one afternoon. In two hours she was back again, excited, hysterical, and calling for her smelling-salts.

"The brute!" she exclaimed. "Why, do you know—he drove along beautifully for five miles. He had but one mile further to go, and I was just congratulating myself that he would go the whole distance, when all at once he decided he had gone far enough, and despite my cries and beseechings—my frantic, frantic expostulations even—he deliberately turned the phaeton around and brought me back home! Oh, I shall never drive again! I know I have experienced a shock that will bring me under that rule—I mean—oh—oh!"

I never before saw Miss Cynthia so confused and excited. I laughed at her then, but

my triumph was short lived. That very afternoon I took my drive as was my wont. It was eight o'clock before I got back. I came very near not getting back at all. Miss Cynthia had recovered from her fright and was busy on her bust of Andrew Jackson.

"What is the matter?" she said, as I threw myself down in a chair and heaved a deep sigh.

"I went driving this afternoon," I said.

Miss Cynthia put two little interrogatory looking stitches in to make the corners of Andrew Jackson's mouth. I anticipated her and went on:

"Talk about smelling-salts—but if ever a man needed them, I do now. Talk about women drivers, Miss Cynthia—" here I choked up with emotion.

"Let me—" said Miss Cynthia, hastily arising.

"No, no; let *me*, this time, Miss Cynthia—let me relieve my overburdened feelings on this painful subject before I die or burst with indignation."

Miss Cynthia sat down again.

It was some time before I could proceed, so great was my agitation. Miss Cynthia's curiosity was greatly aroused,—she promised she would not interrupt me until I finished. This gave me the chance I wanted. "If only you will not, Miss Cynthia," I said, "you will be as good a listener as Content." Then I launched recklessly forth:

"Woman—God bless her, Miss Cynthia—what would the world be without her? And yet I had rather meet an avalanche of millstones, or even a traction engine, any day, than one of these dear creatures when she is doing her own driving. And if there be two of her the risk is just doubled."

Miss Cynthia did not look up.

"I am willing to go on record by saying that no man can truthfully say he ever knew a woman driver to give an inch of the road when she could take it all. Or turn to the right when she could turn to the left and tangle up things. I am even willing to go on record by asserting that no man ever saw one drive who did not drive squarely down the middle of the road, regardless of consequences, with the

full assurance of a pre-empted right to the whole thing and several acres on both sides of it. And if there be two of her, as I said before, Miss Cynthia, and they be talking straight into each other's mouths at the same time—as is their custom, when driving,—telling each other all about the naughtiness of their neighbor's sister's husband's wife, oblivious of everything else around them—even of their horse—but every now and then flopping him up and down the back, with a kind of a double-shuffling jerk of both arms up and down—for no man ever knew a woman to use a whip if she could only flop the lines, Miss Cynthia,—it is then that these sweet and blessed creatures whom God created for nobler purposes, before they took to doing their own driving, become the most dangerous infernal machines a mortal man ever tried to pass on a public highway."

Miss Cynthia kept on embroidering.

"Before you can turn out into a gutter or ditch and give them the earth, they are into you! Before you can pass them, back out, pull out, turn out, fall out, or roll out, they have got you! There is a crash, a jar, two

female shrieks, and then a chorus of 'Sir, how *could* you be so stupid?' accompanied by a look that would freeze a goat, and many little side antics and gesticulations that remind one of the excitement in a group of female puddle ducks when the red calf has stepped on the tail of one of them. You apologize, of course, until you feel as mean as a wet dog that the band-wagon has run over, and while you get out to patch up your splintered wagon, and soothe the feelings of your sensitive little mare, this precious pair of female drivers continue straight on down the middle of the pike, hunting for another victim, in the innocent sweetness of conscious rectitude and sense of duty nobly done, and with the air that nothing particular has happened except that a brute has run into two ladies who had given him all the road!"

Miss Cynthia winced, made two misstitches, but worked on.

"Injure their vehicle? Not on your life! No living man can show me, Miss Cynthia, where one of them was ever injured. And the dead"—I said bitterly—"whom they have

run over and killed are not here to speak for themselves. Frighten their horse? Not at all. That old leather-lunged, nerveless, senseless, spiritless thing which the average woman is content to drive hasn't got enough good blood in it to be frightened if it met a skinned elephant hauling dead alligators to a bone-yard!"

I overdid it here. Miss Cynthia flushed exultingly and said,

"That's true, and it's because you men always give us the no-'countest thing on the place to drive—Tom, for instance."

I winced under this, but reminded Miss Cynthia that she had broken her promise. Then I said apologetically:

"God knows I love woman, Miss Cynthia—in the abstract, concrete, possessive case, ablative absolute,—red-headed even,—and in any of her voices, moods, tenses, numbers and persons, active and passive.

"But as much as I love her, just because she is a woman, Miss Cynthia, and all that, as heaven is my witness, I had rather take the chances of charging with the Six Hundred the

guns of Balaklava and coming out alive, than to pass one of these Syren-looking imbeciles—(Heaven forgive me, Miss Cynthia !)—in an eighty foot public highway, when she is doing her own driving and talking about her neighbor's wife."

Miss Cynthia continued to sew on.

"She runs into you so innocently and yet so fatally. She smashes you so naively, and wrecks you so charmingly and unselfishly, that a poor man cannot do anything but smile, beg her pardon, swear it was all his own fault, that he alone was to blame, and tell her just to drive on over him whenever she gets ready —God bless her ! And the dear thing takes you at your word, Miss Cynthia,—literally and truthfully—and after giving you a look that would scorch a sandrock, she will not forget to go home, and publish it to the four winds of heaven—that is to say, by telling all her female friends, which is the same thing—that she met you coming down the road the other day, and that you were so drunk you did not know which way you were going, and after she had tried every way to drive around

and avoid you, you deliberately pulled across and wrecked her beautiful, beautiful phaeton. The brute !"

Miss Cynthia did not even look up.

"In my callow days I was told that the hand that rocks the cradle rules the world, Miss Cynthia. I now believe it—not because it rocks the cradle, but because it sometimes goes driving on its own hook. And right now, in case of a war with a foreign foe, as the most effectual annihilator the ingenuity of modern science can originate, I propose a brigade of lady drivers who shall be sent to drive down on the enemy with positive orders to turn to the right and thereby evade him—to frighten but not to run over him. The enemy will never know what happened to him."

Miss Cynthia was very still.

"You went driving this morning, Miss Cynthia ; I this afternoon. If there is any thing, not human, I am fonder of than any thing else, it is my little mare and my road-wagon. But pride cometh before a fall, and this is the story of my fall.

"I drove towards the hills to see the sunset, and a beautiful one it was, Miss Cynthia. I was busily engaged drinking in the scene when two of these female drivers hove in sight. It was a narrow pike, and I knew what was coming, so I tried to drive out into a forty-acre wheat-field to give them all the room necessary to pass. For I saw by the way they were talking and the zigzag way they were coming that it would take three pikes running parallel to hold them. But there was a big ditch between me and the wheat-field, and I could not get over. So I drove out to the right, as close to the ditch as I could get, folded my hands, said my prayers, and waited as calmly as I could for the shock. And this is the way they came: The old horse had his head down, and, fast asleep, was shuffling along, first on one side of the road and then on the other. He was trotting in front, pacing in the middle, and seemed to be galloping on stilts behind, while his tail, which had been worn off by constant beating of the double-tree, was banging around like the air-paddles of a flutter-mill. I thought, at first, that per-

haps he was trying to switch off a horsefly that had alighted in the very center of his spinal column just out of range of his tail; but I soon saw he was doing all this hopping behind because one of the drivers was prodding him with a broken whip-staff, while the other, with every revolution of the wheels, was flopping him up and down the back with the lines, and both of them talking at the same time.

"When the crash came they were rounded up with a jerk, and I heard one of the spokes of my wagon tell its broken tale. They shrieked in unison, and then, having found out where they were at, they proceeded to tell me what they thought of me. And there is where I made a mistake, Miss Cynthia. Instead of telling them the truth, I ought to have lied like a lover, told them it was all my fault, that I alone was to blame and begged their pardon. Instead, I tried to explain to them that I was not to blame in the matter.

"'How in the world can you say that, sir?' they both exclaimed, freezingly, at the same time.

"'Ladies,' I said, as politely as I could, 'I

was standing here, perfectly still, almost in this ditch, praying that you would go by and leave me unmolested. At the last moment you crossed the pike and smashed into me. Observe, if you please, the positions of our vehicles.'

"'Oh—oh—oh!' came in a protesting chorus. 'Did you ever in all your life?' And they looked at one another with the air of one who says: 'Well, I have heard of liars before!'

"Then a happy idea struck one of them and she said: 'Isn't it the law of the road, sir, to turn to the right?'

"'Certainly it is, madam,' I said gleefully, thinking I had her now.

"'Just listen to him admitting it, Susie,' she said triumphantly, 'and there he sits over on our left!'

"And with a mixture of pity and triumphant sorrow they punched up their old horse and shuffled off, looking disdainfully back at me every now and then with the curiosity of one who just wanted to see when I would continue my drunken drive and break my neck in the ditch."

I waited, but Miss Cynthia said never a word.

"The poetry of the sunset was now gone from me, and I started for home after getting out and rubbing a little axle oil on the skinned place they had left in my mare's forearm, and looking at my splintered wheel.

"But I had not gone far before I met another one of those lovely idiot drivers. This one was beautiful, Miss Cynthia, and I didn't care much whether she ran into me or not. I would willingly have parted with a wheel to have had her pitched into my arms. She was pink and white, with the prettiest eyes in the world, and a smile that was heaven itself. This sweet creature had tied up her lines on the dash-board and was busy reading a love-letter while her horse attended to all the road and the rest of the thing. I thought I could pass her, but I was mistaken. Her horse wobbled across the pike just at the place he knew meant destruction to me, and another spoke was gone.

"'Why Mr. Ballington,' she exclaimed half angrily—for I knew her—'how in the world

can any one who professes, as you do, to know how to drive, be so reckless and incompetent! Just see, you have ruined my phaeton!'

"I looked at her vehicle — it was not scratched, but another spoke was broken in mine, and the little mare carried a bruised place on her hock. I profited by my experience before, and so I tried other tactics here.

"'My dear Miss Smith,' I said, 'I hope you will forgive me. I deserve all your censure, I know. But the truth is, you happened to look up just as I was passing, and the light of your glorious eyes blinded me so I could not see which way I was driving.'

"I am willing to be run into again, Miss Cynthia, to get the self-satisfied look and glorious smile she gave me. I was instantly forgiven. Nay, more, for before to-morrow she will be telling every friend she has that I am not only the best driver in Tennessee, but the most truthful and honest gentleman she has ever seen!

"But I don't try to pass them any more,

Miss Cynthia. When I see them coming, I stop. And, since the law does not require them to carry a red flag in the horse's head-stall, as it ought to, I shall carry one myself and make a boy run up the pike and flag them until I can get by."

I ceased and waited to see what Miss Cynthia would say to all of it. She did not move. To my astonishment she had been asleep for the last half hour. I waked her up and remarked that it was probably time for her to retire. She rubbed her eyes and replied,

"Ah, yes. But you were telling about running into two ladies, and I wanted to ask you,—did you break their buggy very badly?"

THE BATTLE IN HER EYES.

DAWN dust, shaken from the wings of day,
Has fallen in the deep lake of your eyes,
And starry pollen from the milky way
Down driven from the bowers of the skies;
And lover moonbeams o'er their surface play
Where humor bubbles float or upward rise.

O lakes of love, divinest, azure-hued—
Mirrors of truth—hand-glass of hope and light—
May Time ne'er see them sad or tear-bedewed
Uplooking in the silent eyes of night,
Nor Sorrow drive her sombre sail—and rude—
Dark shadowing that which now is only bright.

CHAPTER IX.

I CANNOT understand Thesis—why she will not see me in the old way. It is now mid-June, and I have not yet seen her alone. Even Miss Cynthia has noticed it, and on several occasions has remarked that she wanted to ask me a question.

Old Wash is very fond of Thesis, and when she was a tiny thing he nicknamed her "Little Glory." He has never called her anything else since. A born woman of the South, she seemed from the first to have understood the old man thoroughly. For many years he has never allowed her to be at home but a day or two before he would spend all the morning shining his brogans and all the afternoon brushing up his double-breasted "King Alfred," as he calls it—the coat that his old master, the law partner of President Polk, gave him, fifty years ago. Then one more morning is spent

getting the dust and cobwebs out of his beaver hat, which is also a relic of the Polk administration. Then he is off to see "Little Glory."

He always comes back with a little present and a happy smile, and during the rest of the summer he is more her slave than if the shackles were really there.

This summer he went as usual. I thought his beaver never looked sleeker, nor his brogans brighter, nor his "King Alfred" so near sweeping, in its majesty, the ground.

He came back with the little present, but not with the smile, and, though he said nothing, I noticed that from that time on he watched me very closely.

For a while Thesis came now and then to see Miss Cynthia. Of course, I would not take advantage of those visits to meet her, since I thought she was avoiding me. Then she ceased coming altogether, and when I have called at Colonel Philips' I have either met Bernice alone or the two together. On these occasions she has acted as if nothing unusual had happened.

But I never have failed to find Joe Forde

there. Forde is now cashier of the bank of which Colonel Philips is president. I wish I liked Joe Forde. I have tried to, all my life, and failed. He is that type of man one sees now and then, whom you may know all your life and then know nothing about him—except that you don't like him. They are what the world calls secretive people. Secretiveness stands in the same relation to selfishness, I have thought, that kleptomania does to stealing—a prettier term for it. And they are cold-blooded, terribly in earnest people,—these secretive people. And when they combine with it the lack of principle which I had felt was in Joe Forde, they would wreck the world to carry out their plans.

As far back as I can remember Joe Forde has loved Thesis in his determined, cold-blooded way. We were schoolmates then, and one day, at recess, when he boastingly declared that Thesis was his sweetheart, and that he would marry her when he grew up, it brought on the stubbornest battle I ever had. I had got him down on the grass and was

pounding him, when Thesis heard of it and ran crying to the scene.

"Oh, you are killing Ned, you are killing Ned," she cried, clinging to my neck and sobbing,—"How dare you, Joe Forde?"

I quit the fight abashed and silent. Up to that time I thought I was killing him.

The Blind Man and I have had several talks about it, and he has shaken his head in an ominous way. I do not think he knows I love Thesis. That is a secret I have kept even from him.

At first I tried to study it out by myself. Then I tried to study it out through Bernice. I told the Blind Man what I was trying to do. He smiled and said, "Let me know when you succeed. The man who knows a woman knows the world."

I did not like to hear him say that—not in this connection. It did not sound like him. What I said to myself was, "That may be for Bernice; but if I can look into Thesis' eyes five minutes I will read it all."

It has had its effect on me, and lately I have decided to make no further effort to see

her. The next day I would think what a fool I was that I ever came to such a conclusion. And then I have paraphrased the Blind Man's remarks, and said, "The man who knows himself, knows the world."

What puzzles me, too, is her secret efforts to throw Bernice and me together. In many delicate ways she has convinced me that Bernice cares more for me than I thought—really more than I'd care for her to do. If I did not think Thesis was above it, I'd suspect her of match-making. It was late in June when I heard that Bernice had gone away for a week's visit. I resolved to stand it no longer, and to see Thesis alone that evening.

There was a beautiful moon shining through the big oaks and poplars that led up to the old place, and I suppose Alana, my saddle-mare, must have made very little noise, for I had noticed she had a fevered heel when I mounted, so I rode her across the blue-grass lawn instead of the gravel-walk, to give her the benefit of the cool night-dew. That is why we rode up on something white under the big elm at the library window before we were seen.

A maltese kitten was purring in her lap. Her simple white dress was cut V-shape at her splendid throat, and her golden-brown hair was in a magnificent coil above. A tiny golden heart on a close-fitting chain encircled her neck and rested on a bosom so pure that an infant angel might have laid his head there and dreamed of another heaven. It was a simple little locket, but my heart gave a leap when I saw it. I had given it to her five years before on her birthday.

"And so I have caught my bird at last," I laughed, as I dismounted and threw the reins behind the saddle-pommel, that Alana might graze. She gave me her hand in the frank old way. I could not help it—the next instant I had it in both of mine, and had kissed it.

She was never excited, never confused. There is no guile in her nature, and, thinking no wrong, she never knew any.

For several moments she did not speak; neither did she withdraw her hand. I looked into her eyes. They met mine with that serene calmness a summer morning throws over a dew-sprinkled world, and with the re-

flected glory with which the star-sprinkled lake looks up into the face of a summer night.

"I am glad you came to-night, Ned," she said, simply, as we sat down. "It will give me a chance to say something to you I have wanted to say—only—but—Ned—I am afraid I cannot say it,—at least, so that you will understand."

"No—I do not understand you," I said, very seriously. "I have not seen you alone since you came home. If I were not a sensible fellow, Thesis, and did not love you, I'd ——"

She almost started as she interrupted me:

"Ned! Promise me, Ned, you'll not talk that way—the old way—any more. You must not. I cannot tell you now, but we cannot be friends any more, if you do."

I looked quickly at her, and read the sad earnestness that was in her eyes. Then I flushed hot with a mortification I had never felt in Thesis' presence before—and pale with a resolution that sent the steel into my heart and the blood out of my cheeks.

I wish I were not so quick to decide. But

things come to me like bolts from a sky. I wish, too, that I were not so sensitive. For a moment it seemed that my life hung in a balance. I saw myself standing where two roads met, and I was as one chained.

For five minutes I did not speak. Neither did Thesis. But she smiled in a pleading, pitying way as she looked me innocently and sweetly in the face—a martyr smile, firing with its hands the fagots around it.

Pride—I wish I had less of it. It is a capital brother-in-arms, but when it becomes commander and leads us against the breastworks of our hopes, behind which stands every armored sweet dream of our life, then it becomes a tyrant.

I did not speak. I would have died before a volley of shrapnel before I'd have asked her to explain.

And she—never before had I seen such a battle in human eyes.

The moon shone full on the field—the field of her glorious eyes—and I watched the fight and saw it as plainly as Bonaparte at Waterloo, when he stood on the heights of Mount

Saint Jean and saw the old guard go down on their last stubborn charge.

And it was a Waterloo for me.

Five — ten — fifteen minutes, I sat and watched it. I had read the issue and knew what it was—this fight between some great conception of, to me, an unknown duty, and —my heart almost burst at the thought, but I felt it—I knew it !—my love.

I could read her eyes, as I never could any other being's on earth. To me they were not eyes, but persons—twin friends that I loved. And as I sat and watched the fight go on in the moonlighted field of my hopes, I deliberately went over every word of a letter I had written to her just before she came home. It was so sweet to me at the time I penned it that I had memorized it, and now, as I sat and watched the ebb and flow, the resolve and stubborn fight—I could not help it—I took her hand in the old way and, bending till my lips touched her cheek, I said,

"Have you forgotten it, dear? May I repeat it now?" Intuitively she knew what I meant. She nodded. "All of it?" I asked.

She nodded again, and I saw a flush of crimson pride sweep in.

Then I whispered the letter once again:

Your Eyes.

(To Thesis.)

"They haunt me—they always have. The first thing I remember of you—when you were a tiny tot—was your eyes. I could not get away from them, even then, to look at your face—they haunted me so. I have seen brighter eyes, and gladder eyes, eyes with more sunlight and perhaps more beautiful, but never eyes that had the depth, the history, of these. Never eyes that tell so much of a fight for faith, nor of a sadness which no man knows and only a poet may read. Never eyes that tell of a truer courage or a more unselfish sweetness, so sad and yet so triumphant in their sadness—holding even in their darkling depths the twilight of a smile.

"Sometimes, when I have seen them in a mood,—the mood that moves your soul,—I have despaired that I may ever win your love—that they belong to some angel spirit that

has passed away from earth and is beyond the touch of all things earthly.

"Then, again, when you laugh, they are the very personification of life, and I almost lose myself in the joy of the thought that such depths might one day be mine to know and to sound. Oh, the depths of them! Oh, the strength they will throw into the life of a soulful man! The man those eyes love can never be a coward. He can no more be weak nor deceive than can the poet who has learned to look up into the fathomless blue of the heavens—God's eyes—and has seen Him there.

"They are so sad, yet full of such a personality—so full, that when I saw them last I distinctly heard them say,

"'I walk down the valley of silence,
Down the dim, voiceless valley, alone;
And I hear not the fall of a footstep
Around me, save God's and my own;
And the hush of my heart is as holy
As hovers where angels have flown.'

"But the most comforting thought, to me, about them, is in the depth of their pity—their

human pity. And that which awes me most about them is their unflinching courage in the path of what they conceive to be their duty.

"They are loyal, too, and the cause they advocate or the friend they love will always find them the same, for the light never changes in these windows of your soul. Windows? Aye, more than windows. I would call them conservatories, where everything above is glass, and one has only to look and behold the flowers that grow within—the flowers of honesty, sincerity, pureness, truthfulness—the blossom of unselfishness blooming on the stem of queenliness."

I kissed her cheek when I finished. She did not move.

"Look at me, Thesis," I whispered. She looked up—her eyes into mine. And then I saw the battlefield was wet with tears.

Twenty minutes—twenty-five—passed, and neither of us spoke. I prayed she would yield and tell me; that, for once in her life, the spirit of earth might conquer the spirit of the skies.

A mocking-bird awoke from a nearby bush, and it seemed to me, as he sang, that his

notes had more of the bugle-charge than the glory of his love-life.

Twice I thought she would speak and tell me—that the red line of love would conquer the white line of duty. Then it was that the tiny golden heart on her bosom rose and fell with the fluttering wave of a banner advancing. Red wave after red wave marched over her cheek; then white wave after white wave followed, until I fancied I saw there the emblem of our nation's flag. But it passed quickly, and the white lines stood solid.

"Oh, red love-lines, rally! Come on!" I said to myself.

And then her bosom grew calm. The little heart seemed scarcely to rise and fall, and I knew the white lines of duty had conquered.

I looked at my watch. It had lasted an hour.

"Good-night, Thesis," I said, rising.

"Good-night, Ned."

She raised her head. I could not help it,—and it was taps for the platoons of the white lines, for their lights went out, and in the darkness a bold red sentinel seized their flag and hurled it over the ramparts!

"Thesis! Thesis!" I cried. "Will you? Will you? Me? I, who love you?"

She turned and threw herself on the bench.

I sprang into the saddle, and as I turned to ride away I saw two hands I loved clasped above a little golden locket, and the black shadow of the elm, like the stern commander of the duty forces, stood over her.

THE VICTORY OF FIRE.

A THISTLE-DOWN upon a sea of Hope,
Wind toss'd, yet knows not whence they are,
Wave rocked, and hath no power with them to cope,
Held in the influence of some unseen star.
Above,—the sky; beneath,—the unfathom'd sea;
Around,—the miracles of life and light—
Assured of death, his one known destiny,—
Grim anchorage in the pale gates of the night.

And yet across the sea of fate and foam,
To him that will, Faith finds a pathway home.—"*Man.*"

CHAPTER X.

BERNICE is a magnificent creature. I have seen her frequently of late. She shall never know why I went so often at first. Only my heart shall know it. Yet I could never see Thesis alone.

"The man who knows a woman, knows the world," quoth the Blind Man. I would give the world to know Thesis again. Had I offended her? No, not unless love was an offense; and I have yet to hear of a woman who considered it so. Does she dislike me? My own heart tells me better than that.

Whenever I have met her on the street or in company she is the same gracious Thesis. If I could only see her long enough to read her eyes again! But she will not look at me in the old way. And I? Pride is a stubborn thing.

I have thought of numberless ways to meet her and force her to tell me why she has willed

it that the old way must be forgotten. But whenever I formulate a plan it always fades in the shadowy uncertainty of an hour under the elms, the sweet sorrow of a moonlit night, where I begged with my eyes for the explanation that should have been mine for the asking.

To ask again would be only manacling defeat.

Last week I met her on the road as I was driving to town. She had found a deserted oriole's nest and was taking it home to add to her little museum. I had written Bernice I would call the night before, but something prevented.

"That is a pretty specimen," I said. "How did you get it?"

"It was on the tip end of the limb of a willow. I had a little negro boy to climb and get it for me."

There was a silence of a few minutes. I saw she felt it was becoming embarrassing, and I thought it was scarcely like her, when she said, "Someone at our house was disappointed that you did not come last evening."

"Was it you, Thesis?" I asked earnestly, looking straight into her eyes.

She colored quickly, but did not reply.

"Was it you, Thesis? Tell me if it was, and let us end this folly."

She looked at me very calmly and said, "It was Bernice." I cut my horse viciously with the whip. I begged his pardon afterwards, but before I could soothe his wounded feelings he had left her standing in the road. Then, in sheer desperation, I caught myself saying over and over again, "Bernice is a magnificent creature."

The next evening I went to see Bernice. This time Joe Forde was there, and the conversation became general. Thesis I thought was unusually quiet. Bernice was explaining her idea of love. "It is Platonic love, in the end," she said, "that lasts."

"Ned," said Thesis.

I turned quickly to the quiet form that was speaking to me, yet looking longingly out of the window across the fields.

"Ned, have you got the little trundle-bed at Lynwood yet—in its old place?"

Bernice laughed. "In heaven's name, what has a trundle-bed to do with Platonic love?"

I went over to where Thesis was sitting. My heart had leaped and was beating wildly to hear her ask, in the old way, this simple question. Had it been written in a book of gold it could have carried no fuller meaning.

"Thesis!" I whispered. "Thesis!"

"I—I—wasn't thinking," she said nervously. "Don't you see, you have left Bernice and Mr. Forde?"

"Thesis!" I said, sternly.

"Ned, if you must know—Bernice—Bernice," she whispered, and nodded to me to look.

"Yes, she is a magnificent creature," I added, glancing at the queenly face that was looking down on Joe Forde. Then I almost started when I read the look that was in the haughty bearing of her head—in the calm contempt of her eyes. Forde was trying to talk to her. He was saying something explanatory. She was listening, but with a look Minerva might cast on an offending mortal.

I should dislike to have Bernice Philips de-

spise me as much as I saw she did the narrow little soul before her. I turned to Thesis for an explanation. She only shook her head. Then she whispered to me, "Isn't Bernice magnificent? I should think every man would be in love with her."

"Thesis," I said, "I wish very much to speak to some one on the porch,—will you?"

She nodded. "I'll see that you do."

I had selected a favorite seat under a wistaria vine, and was thinking how I should talk to her in the old way without sacrificing my pride, when Bernice came out.

"Thesis said you wished to speak to me, and I am glad to get away," she said, "for I hate that man, Ned—I hate him!"

I thought she never looked so queenly before,—the Philips pride ablaze in her eyes; her whole nature that of the daughter of a baron whose pride had been wounded in her father's halls.

For a while I, too, was silent. My heart seemed turned to stone at this last rebuff from Thesis. Self-preservation is the first law of love, as of life. Let love but see annihilation

ahead, and how quickly it will bring up its other forces to help it out—to save it from death—wounded pride, indifference, " 'tis better so,"—the light of other eyes, the will to forget, aye, even the conscriptment of another love for the one that has fallen.

As I looked at her in her beauty and magnificence, the queenliest woman of the blue-grass lands, I made a reckless resolve. I would conquer one love with another. I would love Bernice.

Oh, Love! Oh, Thesis! Will you forgive me?

Bernice is a magnificent creature. I began to look upon her with increasing pride. How she would grace Lynwood! How proud I should be to introduce so queenly a woman as my wife! I had never seen her so gracious as she was that night. Her haughtiness seemed to melt, and once or twice I thought I saw certain tokens of an affection I had never seen in her nature before.

She was beautiful and charming in her brilliancy. She was beautiful—superbly so—and held me strangely fascinated.

And what is love, anyway, I said to myself,

but the passing chariot of two sentimental souls, carrying, in a kind of dream-float, a castle of the air, to be drawn through gates of imagery and gold, guarding the realms of paradise, only to come back to earth again ? How much better off the world would be if people would let sense and not sentiment dictate with whom they should live, till death—or the divorce court—divides them.

Bernice is a magnificent creature.

While we were talking I heard some one go into the parlor where Forde and Thesis were. It was Colonel Philips, and he looked worried, and even distressed. He spoke to Forde pleasantly, but I saw he was ill at ease in his cashier's presence. I knew as soon as I saw them exchange glances that there was something between them—a certain triumphant self-assertiveness on the part of Joe Forde and dogged compliance on the part of Colonel Philips—which no one but they understood. Colonel Philips is a very weak man. His besetting weakness is his false pride, and I knew to-night it was strained and tried to its highest notch when he could humble himself

as I saw him do, and cringe and drop his positiveness and manhood before such a man as Joe Forde. In a moment I saw that the cashier was really the president, that the servant was the master.

When I left an hour afterward, it seemed I had never understood Bernice so fully. We had talked as we never had before. There was a tinge of bitterness in her nature I did not admire, it is true, but there was an intellectuality there that was superb. She was irresponsive and distant. But I could love her —yes, as one would love with awe a glacier among the Alps.

Joe Forde had gone. I was thinking of Bernice as I passed down the walk to where my mare stood tied. It led around a wing of the house, in the upper story of which was the simple little room I knew was Thesis'. I had seen it often when we were children. I knew every nook, every corner, how each picture hung in it. In the shadow of the oak, as I untied my horse, I looked up and saw a motto hung upon the opposite wall in her room; it was framed in lilac and blue,

"Love seeketh not her own."

I must have made a noise as I mounted. She came to the window and looked down.

"Is it you, Ned?"

"I am just going," I said.

"Wait. I had written you something I was going to mail to you. You must read it and be brave, and then, Ned"—here she leaned out of the window, and as I saw her face and beautiful hair in a parapet of lace and light I thought of the Blessed Damosel on the parapet of heaven—"Then, Ned, you must forget me."

She was gone, but the next instant a card fluttered out. I dismounted and picked it up. Then I struck a match on Alana's saddle-skirt and read. It was her visiting card, with her name on one side. On the other, a violet was pinned; through this, written in her fine hand,

"Peace I leave with you. . . . . Not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."

I kissed it and put it in my waistcoat pocket,

and the world, the stars and the heavens have smelt of violets ever since.

But Bernice,—I said in sheer desperation as I rode out of the gate—she is a magnificent creature.

There are days when we all have disgusts, and so I said to the Blind Man the next day,

"It's all nonsense—this thing called love."

The Blind Man smiled.

"Real love is founded on common sense," I went on. "The other is founded on sentiment. Real love is the child of the will, of judgment, of cool reason and calm resolve. The other is the fledgling of moonshine and accident. Falling in love!" I added, derisively —"That's a good term for it, and correctly expressed. And the fall is often fatal, and nearly as bad as falling down the elevator-shaft. A man can love any woman if he so wills—any good and physically perfect woman —and be happy with her."

The Blind Man interrupted me with a sarcastic wink. "And if she happens to will it otherwise, there'll be a conflict of wills—a cat and parrot time, eh?"

"Physical beauty," I went on, "is the foundation of it all. The rest is a mixture of the monkey and donkey that is in us,—or, if you please, sentiment," I said.

"Ned," said the Blind Man, "is the flag still floating from the arsenal staff? I wish I could see it again. God bless it! But is it still there? A bit of silk, my boy, with red and white stripes on it, and stars in a square of blue. A practical thing—just silk; and a sensible thing—just certain colors. A yard or two of cloth, which in a store you might rip up and sell at so much a yard. But let insult fire a bullet through it, and see how quickly the land would be baptized with blood. Fifty millions of people would charge through hell to die for it. It is sentiment—soul—that rules the world at last. Your soul is asleep to-day, my boy, but I could awaken you in five minutes with a sentiment, such as, for instance, dying to save you——"

I glanced quickly up at him—there was so much earnestness in his manner.

"Such as dying to save you, my boy," he went on "which you know I'd do if neces-

sary, and it would arouse a sentiment, a soul in you which, compared with your body, would be like that sun up yonder compared with the thing which I am kicking out from under my heel,"—and he kicked a piece of flint into the road.

Then he laughed and said, as he walked off, "Ned, a man's liver is a map of his life. I'd advise you to have yours looked into."

I went away still more wretched.

A wretched man will do anything. And so I began systematically to work to try to forget Thesis.

Wounded love, run through a vital spot, how hard it fights for life!

I brought all the forces of my will to work, and backed them with the battalion I had called Common Sense. Thesis was poor. Bernice was rich. Thesis was quiet and domestic, and cared little for society. Bernice was a magnificent creature, whom to be husband to meant to be envied of men. Thesis was lovely in her way. Bernice was a magnificent creature.

Oh, Love! Oh, Thesis! Will you forgive me?

That night I felt I had conquered myself, until I picked up my favorite volume of Keats. Pressed in its pages was a snow-white summer lily. Thesis had given it to me only a year ago that very summer night, as we sat on a rustic bench in the moonlight. She had worn it all evening over her own heart. When I left, she had pinned it over mine.

I could see it all. It came back to me—the sweetness, the glory of it—the very smell of her hair. She had never used either a perfume or a powder, but like a lily that brews its own sweetness in the laboratory of its soul she carried always with her a perfume which had no duplicate on earth.

I arose and began to walk the floor.

Talk about material things and that the soul is not immortal, I thought, when the sight of a faded flower will bring back a whole summer of life and love—will beget living months, children of immortality. Talk about death ending all, when the smell of a lock of hair, cut in imagination even, from the brow of a summer of long ago, begets a love that will live beyond the skies. Talk about disintegration and annihila-

tion, when the very memory of a lost love may become the resurrected dream of an immortality.

It poured in on me as a flood. I could see the thoughts coming before they reached me, in troops and in crowds.

Oh, divinest evidence of immortality, when we have within ourselves the wonderful process of living our own life again; when a thought from the soul can bring back another thought which was dead and buried, and as it rises from the grave and stands before us, chastened and in white, we have only to look and see our double self—Ourself of the Present passing judgment on Ourself of the Past—pointing its wand at every grave of the past and calling forth one unbroken rank of spirit beings, beginning with a cherub face in a cradle and ending in a white-winged, shadowy thing of the stars.

"'Aye, but we die,' saith the fool."

In a moment it all came back to me. As one who dreams, I saw the little gold locket around her neck. I arose to go; and she, as she had done since we were children, she arose and

stood by my side. She took the lily from her heart and pinned it over mine. Then she put her hands on my shoulders, tipped up, kissed me, and said, "Good-night, Ned. Take care of yourself for your Thesis."

I shut the book quickly. I was panting for breath. Myself of the Present called up Myself of Last Week and sat in judgment on it. And what an evidence of divinity in the soul it is that the soul of the present is always allowed to judge the soul of the past.

I was ablaze with indignation at myself of last week. I felt I was a judge, indeed, and exclaimed aloud,

"What a fool you were! Platonic love! It will win nothing in this world nor the next."

"Dat's a fac', boss—dat's a fac'."

This brought me back to earth. From the sublime to the ridiculous is only a step. It was old Wash, and he had come to tell me how Marjorie, the pacing filly, was stepping, as he termed it, in her work. The old man knew of every race for forty years, and he evidently thought I was talking horse to myself, for he went on,

"I knowed dat hoss you call 'Tonic Love. I seed 'im go at Hartford 'way back in de sebenties."

I smiled, but I remembered the race in which Platonic Love was a first favorite.

"Don't you 'member de day," he went on, "when he struck de gang dar—True Blue, Bridal Morn, De Gal I Lef' Behin' Me, an' Dat Ole Sweetheart Ob Mine? Don't you 'member it,—fur you wus dar,—an' whut he was gwine do to de crowd? Don't you 'member what fine harness he had, an' dat five hundred dollah sulky? How he pranced an' paced an' scored by de gran' stan' lak de wind afire, till de gamblers bet on 'im five to one an' it looked lak de yearth was his'n? He made de yudders look lak twenty cents till de race was called, an' den dey made him look lak a pewter nickel in de vaults ob a busted bank.

"Lor', whut fun I had! I'd bet all my henaig an' potater an' 'possum money on de little Mizzuri filly—Dat Ole Sweetheart Ob Mine—bet on her fur her name sake—fur I'd ruther walk home eny day, busted in a right'ous

cause, than to win on a fraud an' ride home in a Pullmum palace.

"Dey called de race, and den de fun begun. Ole 'Tonic Love was all right on parade, but a counterfeit in de real battle. Whut er awful time dey had gittin' 'im to score down—gittin' him to start eben! When all de yudders jes' wanted to march down like a weddin' procession, he'd break, an' balk, an' hate ter cum' to de scratch. De yudders knowed what dey wanted, an' wus reddy fur de word—reddy to go de race ob dey life, an' take it, weal or woe, good or bad till death us do part. But ole 'Tonic Love wus onsartain, 'an thinkin' mebbe he wus mistaken, an' sorter tired, an' all dat. An' when dey did git off, boss, don't you 'member how he dun? Broke at de fus' quarter, fell down at de half, caught de flag in de fus' heat, an' died dat night in his stall ob wind colic? I tell you, boss, 'Tonic Love neber was knowed to go de battle ob life—it takes de Ole Sweetheart kind to stan' all de trials an' sorrers an' dispintments and land yur a winner at de wire.

"But, Lor' bless yo' soul, honey, dat

little Mizzuri pacin' filly—Dat Ole Sweetheart Ob Mine—wa'n't she a daisy? Wa'n't she oil in de can? Didn't need no overcheck, knee boots, nor nuffin'. Hadn't no waste action. Glided along lak' a double-action locomotive on silver-plated rails. Had it nip an' tuck wid True Blue de fus' heat, but beat 'er only by a nose. Fought out de naixt one wid Bridal Morn an' De Gal I Lef' Behin' Me, an' beat 'm by a lash, and den she paced de whole gang to a stan'still, busted de rekerd, an' made de man dat owned her rich an' happy. Don't you 'member it, boss?"

I must have been listening with an amused smile, for he went on, slyly and cunningly,

"Boss, don't tie onto eny filly bekase she is a high-stepper, wid a graceful neck an' goes all de gaits. Don't take 'er jes' becase she is sound an' city broke. Don't buy her on her pedigree, eben if it do run back to imported Diomed on one side an' Colonial Dams on de yudder, fur I've knowed many a man to git nuthin' but a pedigree. Don't do it, boss. I've seed 'em, an' dey allers look better in a picture den dey do in de homestretch. But stick

to de Ole Sweetheart kind, dat am sound an' senserbul an' true, dat don't wear nuffin' but de harness, an' allers reddy fur de race. Take dem dat you know, an' lub all yo' life, dat ain't got no wheels in her haid, but plenty ob Trabeler crosses on her dam's side——"

"What are you talking about?" I said with feigned indignation.

"Why, I are talkin' about hosses, sah, an' ef you'll step out to de barn I'll show you whut I are talkin' about."

I smiled and followed.

In his favorite room in the barn, where he kept the harness nicely oiled and the saddles hung and the floor always swept, just over a stall door he had hung a picture of Thesis she had given him years ago. He had framed it in a horseshoe, and to-day he had twined around it a cluster of wild roses. Just beneath it a beautiful chestnut head with a star and blaze —a head like a steed of the Cæsars carved in cameo—looked satisfyingly out from the upper part of the stall door. I patted her cheek. She was my and the old man's pet, this Brown Hal filly. Not a day of her life we

had not prophesied great things of her, told each other of her wonderful points, her great speed, and strength, and gentleness and sense. Now she was four years old and ready for the races. I stood admiring the picture, the beautiful, sensitive chestnut head below, the calm, sweet, divinely fair one above.

The old man looked, too. Then he stepped before them and said, with a comical bow and gesture, "Boss, dar's de gal an' dar's de filly."

That night I could stand it no longer. I would see Thesis at all hazards, and I humbled my pride when I rode over to the old place.

"Is Thesis at home?" I asked of Bernice.

Yes, but she had an engagement with Mr. Forde, and they were within.

"Damn Mr. Forde!" was what I thought to myself. What I said was, "He has grown very rich of late by a deal in bank stock."

"Could you keep a family secret?" asked Bernice as she came up to my side and whispered in my ear. "Thesis is going to marry Mr. Forde. It is all arranged."

A big star which had just arisen above the black hills which fringed the West was blinking and scintillating as if its very soul was shaken. I remember distinctly how queerly it acted. Then the others seemed to partake of its wild excitement, and acted as if a thousand electric demons had been loosened in their hearts.

I sat down on the railing of the veranda and clutched the post. When I remembered very distinctly again, Bernice was calmly saying, "I suppose it is a good arrangement all around, only I am sorry for Thesis. But Mr. Forde is eligible and rich, and real love is founded on common sense at last."

I believe life is so adjusted and balanced that a man pays to the debit of every false deed or thought a credit coined from the sweat and anguish of his soul.

Never had words come back more quickly to roost.

I do not know exactly how it happened, but when I left I was engaged to Bernice.

A SMILE IN THE DARK.

HEAVEN-BREWED nectar from the eternal hills,
Essence of truth and sweet beneficence-
Soul of the summer cloud and winter rills
Distilled in glorious munificence.
Symbol of all pureness, and holding up
The eye of nature to the face of form,
The perfumed lake within the lily's cup,
The white blanched cheek of ocean in the storm.
Thin mist veiling round the cheek of morn,
Spirit of rainbows and the evening skies,
Hung in rich drapery when the stars are born
And peep from out with wondering, baby eyes.

Purity, by angels lent in globes of love—
Innocence, which God has sent from heaven above.

To an Artesian Well.

CHAPTER XI.

I THINK the holiest sight I ever saw was Thesis leading the Blind Man to church. All her life she has been a great favorite of Mr. Emerson. He has petted her from a child, and she still calls him by the baby name her lips first made of Emerson—"Tem." She is very fond of him, and in his bluff way he says of her, "Ned, God made only one like her—then he lost the pattern."

In vacation days she would never allow his negro boy to take him to church. She always claimed that as her privilege. And he is the only man who ever went to church with Thesis.

One summer she said to me, in her sweet, frank way, "I do not think I ought to go to church with you, Ned; and you know I'd rather go with you than any other of my friends. It seems to me too sacred a thing for

even friends to divide it. There we should put everything but God aside. I do not like to hear of close communion and open communion. I think we should commune only with God. I cannot understand how people can go to church as if it were a society event; and as for young people going there to indulge in idle twaddle, oh, Ned, isn't that sacrilege?"

But as I said, she leads the Blind Man to church every Sunday morning. And it was last Sunday morning that I made a discovery. It was when she took his hand, in her innocent way. Then I saw a new light leap into his eyes. I was standing near when she found him. She had gone to his home as usual, but he had gone down town after the mail.

"You have tried to run off from me today," she laughed, as she caught up with him; "but you know you cannot do that, Tem. Hold him, Ned," she laughed, "while I catch him."

The Blind Man held out his hands. There was absolute radiance in his face. She took one of his hands, and then I saw it all.

They passed on down the street. I do not think the Blind Man himself knew what I had discovered. There was no consciousness on his part to show it. His was as a cloud-clothed night suddenly lit up by the pulsing smile of summer lightning. The clouds were there—he knew that; they were a part of his night—but the sweet light that lit them up for a moment,—he did not make it, he knew not whence it came. God had sent it, and it lit up his night. That was enough for him.

From that time on my love and pity for the Blind Man has been deeper. It was as if I had looked on one who, condemned to grope in solitary confinement in a dungeon, has seen by the star-beam that shone for a moment, each night, through a crevice in his prison, the image of an inaccessible love, walking in the sunlight of another world. He was utterly unconscious that he loved Thesis. I knew that by the very openness of it—the unreserved radiance of it—the child-like simplicity with which he revealed it.

In the shade of a tree which grew up by the walk he suddenly stopped. She looked up at

him and smiled. He never saw that smile, and then I thought to him had come the crowning sorrow of blindness—never to see the smile of the woman he loved.

One may sorrow never to see again the sunset. Never more to stand upon The Knob, and see the faint and far-off reflection in the rock-cleft shadows of the Duck, making a sunset above and a sunset below. Because, having once seen it, one may see it forever in memory's eye. And the bridge over the Duck, aye, it would be hard to give that up. To stand upon it no more at midnight with the stars above and the stars in the river below. With the river flowing like a flaming diamond through sides of sapphire under great lime boulders that seem to prop the skies. The Duck, bold-bluffed and crooked, darkening in shadows or shimmering in starlight, and never yet desecrated by the touch of a wheel of commerce. One may forget even that, or the sleeping hills and nodding woods and cool cedar groves, carpeted with velvet moss, that wind around the never-failing sweetness of the "Kiss-Me-Quick" pike. Or the glory of a

June day among the hills of Maury, stretching above them, as they sleep, like the film of lace drapery over the crib of a sturdy babe. Or the clouds—poems writ in the sky; the look of children; the romance of a risen morn; the ever-changing yet perpetual story and glory of Nature as she lives and loves in the Middle Basin.

But God pity the man who has never seen the smile of the woman he loves.

She looked up in his face and smiled.

"Thesis," said the Blind Man, "are you as pretty as you used to be? I haven't seen you since you were a child."

"Tem, you rogue! As homely, you mean," she laughed. "Now aren't you ashamed to ask me that question on the way to church?"

"I do not care to know how any other woman in the world looks but you," he went on quietly. "You wouldn't care, child, if I ran my hand over your face?"

Her big brown eyes looked at him in astonishment. "Why no, Tem—if it pleases you."

Almost like a benediction the Blind Man's

hand fell on her golden brown hair. I thought I had never seen so sacred a touch.

"Why, child, it is glorious—glorious hair. A little wavy, too—kind o' curly—and so thick and natural. And the color? Now let me see—it has changed some since you were a tiny tot. If the sun shines on it I'd say it was auburn; if the moonlight kissed it, I'd say it was dark. But in the daylight, the blessed, every-day daylight, I'd say it was—glorious," and he laughed.

"Come, hurry up, Tem," she said; "you'll have me so vain I'll not hear a word of the sermon."

"What a fine brow, Thesis. I knew you'd have that. But it's broader than I thought. You are slow to act, but you never change. And if you once love, it will be an eternity thing with you.

"Your eyes? There, child, they have never changed at all, and so I am looking into them now, as I did long ago. Then, even though you were a child, I'd watch them sometimes in their far-away search for the angels, looking across earth and sky, reflect-

ing the visions they were seeing in a fairer clime."

"O, Tem; do hurry up. You know I cannot see into other worlds any more than you can."

"And that funny little nose—about half an inch shorter than it ought to be—and turned up just a little—that hasn't changed either. I am looking at that. It's a funny little thing."

Thesis laughed. "Tem, if you don't stop making fun of my nose, I'll—I'll drop you."

"Just like a woman," laughed the Blind Man; "I've praised everything but your nose, and now you want me to tell a fib about that. Start into praising a woman, you'd better go the whole thing."

Thesis looked at him a mocking grimace.

He was silent awhile, silent and serious. Then he burst out in his impulsive way,

"And your mouth. O, Thesis, that little rainbow mouth. Child, do you know you haven't kissed me in a mighty long time?"

Thesis burst into a merry laugh.

"Well, of all the sentimental old Tems!

Do you think I am wearing short frocks yet, Tem ?"

"Aren't you ?" asked the Blind Man.

"Well I wish you could see. Five feet and as many inches, and weighing one hundred and thirty pounds," she said.

"I wish I could, too," said the Blind Man, with inexpressible sadness. "Just to see you —just to see you, and then go blind again."

"Nonsense, Tem," she laughed, "you're acting just as they say silly people do in love. Come now, stop your foolishness, or I'll think you are, and that will spoil it all."

And then the truth flashed over the Blind Man. He looked up, his face blanched, his mouth, for a moment, was hard set, and his visionless eyes wore the look of Calvary.

He had seen the maid in the star, and the light that went out with her passing was another blindness to him—a blinding of the blind.

The fight lasted just a moment. But it made him reel, stagger, and almost faint. He clutched her hand for support.

"O, Tem, don't squeeze my hand so !"

The Blind Man smiled and walked slowly on.

I had seen that smile before. It was on the face of a gallant old soldier, who had starved to death in prison. He had not seen his beloved for two years. He was dying in that prison, and they told him if he could live to get home he might go. In sight of the old home she came out to meet him, and their two boys were at her side.

"Oh, I am at home and well again; well again, beloved," he cried.

Then he held out his arms, smiled and died.

And that smile never left him—like an angel of light, sitting triumphant in the whitened halls of death, aye, even on the Conqueror's own throne, and proclaiming that there be earthly loves which build their temple on the stony brow of Dissolution itself.

THE SORROWING STARS.

SWEET is the thought, that, some day
I shall rest.
Some day the good, glad sun will rise
Above the crest
Of billowed hills and ocean skies
The world to bless,
But it will greet my tired eyes
At rest—sweet rest.

Sweet is the thought, that, some night
I shall sleep—
Some night the sorrowing stars will rise
And peep
From out the mother skirt of nightly skies—
But I shall weep
Not back within their answering eyes,
For I shall sleep.

CHAPTER XII.

I SHALL never forget the night I called and took Bernice her ring.

The man who puts a ring on the finger of the woman he is going to marry, and does not feel a happiness he has never felt before, is damned to begin with. . . . I am glad I do not remember all that occurred, but I do remember this:

"We will tell Thesis," said Bernice.

She came out just before I left. I could not tell her, and I hoped Bernice would not. But when she saw the ring, it went through her as quickly as one of its flashes permeate a twilight. She came quietly over to my side, held out her hand and said simply, "Good-by, Ned."

"No, no, not good-by, but good-night," I said, and I stooped, half playfully, to give her

the kiss I had always given. Not any movement or motion of hers stopped me.

She looked at me,—and then I could no more have kissed her than I could have profaned the heavens by tossing a smoky lantern into the night and calling it a star. It was nearly dark. I am glad it was.

I sometimes think there are times when every man considers, more or less seriously, the problem of suicide. That night in my room I twirled a pistol over and over for an hour, as I sat and thought in my despair.

A card lay on my table. I took it up and read, through the dying breath of a withering violet: ". . . . not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."

I went to my window and threw the pistol across the lawn.

Do you know this of birds, that they have their favorite hours for singing, and so make one unbroken wave of music around the world? Perhaps Webster was thinking of this when he paid that tribute to the English flag, never before equaled by tribute to any

flag from the lips of man. And so with birds.

I counted them, in my agony of despair, as I lay awake that night. At half-past one a small green finch awoke near my window and sang his simple song. Scarcely was he through before a sleepless mocking-bird, poet-like, with brain so full of fire and melody he could not sleep, began a faint and far-off "Miserere" in the hush of a half-veiled moon. A black-cap caught it up—not much of a song, but just enough to appear as a kind of an applause to the melody of the mocking-bird. It was nearly four when a black-bird piped his merry note, to be followed a half hour later by the flute-like notes of a thrush, and, later still, by those of a wren. Then came a sparrow, and then another wren, then the chaffinches, and then the linnets, until the chirp and whistle of a lazy lark was heard—really the last bird to find that the sun had arisen. And yet the world holds his name as a synonym of sunup. The astonishing thing about the world is what it does not know about itself.

During the day it is the same, one bird

after another having his favorite hour for singing, and not ending at night, as is generally supposed, with the whippoorwill's and nighthawk's cry, but with the song of waking birds and soulful birds, "following the sun and keeping company with the hours," making one unbroken wave of melody around the world.

Bernice and I had decided there need be no delay in our wedding. It was to take place the next month. She wished to go to Europe for her honeymoon. Had it been left to me I should never have decided to go out of sight of the hills of Tennessee.

I thought that Miss Cynthia would be greatly surprised when I told her, but I was mistaken. She looked at me with unusual interest, and a merry twinkle shone in her earnest eyes. In fact, she even smiled. This was all so unusual for Miss Cynthia that I was greatly surprised.

"I will give my consent," she said, "if you will let me ask you one more question," then she looked a little confused. I thought she looked twenty years younger.

"O, that's easily earned," I said. She came up to me with more graciousness than I had ever seen in her before. She crooked her finger in my button hole, and so held me fast.

"Now will you not—will you not—" she began.

I looked down on Miss Cynthia with a puzzled countenance, I know. In truth, I began to be interested in her.

"Tell me," she went on—"just how it—how it—it, you know—" Miss Cynthia was actually blushing!—"how it affects—affects—people—that is, people who—who——"

She was blushing furiously. And in that blush her whole nature was transformed. I saw another being before me—not Miss Cynthia, but a woman. Not the old maid with silvery hair and deep-set indifferent eyes, looking aimlessly future-ward; but a woman whom God had made to be a mother, and therefore happy. There was a light in her eyes, the first I had ever seen—a smile of joyful fulfillment on her lips—the first that had ever lingered there. It changed her very look—her very nature. Now she looked, I thought,

so dignified and distinguished with her white hair combed gracefully back and her head carried more proudly than I had ever seen it before—it had always been humble enough. And her face,—before, so pale and listless the light that fell there! Now, it fell like the crimson blush of the dying day, turning the twilight of its life into the memory of a morning.

Miss Cynthia was positively lovely. O holy ray of love, that can turn the petals of a withering lily into rose-leaves of light!

"You see," she blushed and went on—"you see, Ned——"

"Miss Cynthia," I smiled, "I see you are in love."

Then for all the world I would not have said it. For a moment she looked at me in a pitiful, hurt way. Then she burst into tears.

I think they were the first she had ever shed in that way,—the first that had ever come into her poor unsatisfied life—her life of duty, of trial borne alone, of a yearning for love and sympathy which never came, of seeing only the present, of knowing no future.

They touched me so, I could do nothing but slip away to the barn. And yet I would have given much just to have sat down by her and wept too.

But at the barn I was greatly touched. I had stopped to pet Marjorie as she thrust her shapely head out of her stall. Then I looked up and missed the picture that had always hung there. The old man noticed it and said,

"She ain't dar, no mo', sah! dun tuck Little Glory down to my cabin, an' dar she gwine stay as long as I lib. I'll nurver desert her—no, sah!"

They were simple words, but the old man will never know how they touched me.

* * * * * *

"I would not try to drive him to-day," said the trainer. "Marjorie needs her work. If you will drive for exercise on your wedding morning," he laughed, "drive something that is safe."

"Why not?" I asked, as I stood and looked at them put on the boots and the finishing touches to the great black giant, in silken sheen and glossy coat, who stood nervously

grinding his bit, in keen anticipation of the few swift heats that awaited him.

"He'll be rank and ugly to-day," went on the trainer. "It has rained so he hasn't had his work for a week. I weigh two hundred and am strong as most men, but he handled me in the backstretch that day as if I had been a babe." Then he added seriously, "He is not a gentleman's horse to-day, sir."

"That is why I shall drive him," I said, recklessly. And the next instant I had jumped into the toy thing of steel and hickory which glided on air and rubber behind the great horse's heels. A darky ran by his side and snapped the overcheck, and as we reached the track I saw, by the way the big horse went up against the bit and nervously fought for his head, that he expected a battle with me.

Twice around the track we went, until he was keyed to his speed and lithe as a hickory withe. Then I turned him about and gave him his head for a fast mile.

At the half he went off his feet and plunged madly.

"They will never know it was not an acci-

dent," I said to myself as I cut him with a whip that fell like a blade of fire. I knew what was coming—I admired him the more for it.

For an instant he quivered from heel to head at the indignity of the insult. Then he reared upward as though he would leap to the stars if the bit was out of his mouth, and the next instant he fell backward upon me. It seemed to me a black meteorite struck my head. . . .

There were fantastic dreams I had, and then it seemed that eons and eons of time went by, when, try as I would, I could not know, and if I did know, it was only enough to assure me in a shadowy sort of a way that I was not knowing. Someone was holding my head as in a vise.

Night—was the world in chaos again,—and the day, would it never come ? It came and went—light, darkness, day—but days of only second's time. "I understand how eternity is now," I thought once between the darkness and the daylight—" they are days of second's time with God."

Day—and a tall and very beautiful creature was silently looking at me and assisting around the room.

Day again—flickering and full of twilight, and the man with instruments said, after it seemed to me he had encased me in a solid rock, "I love the boy, but I hope he will die. Paralyzed for life on one side, and his mind will probably go with it."

Then I knew the man who had been holding my head was blind, because he said, "He shall not die if I can save him. I wish I could see you again, Ned, my boy."

He was holding my head when he said it, and I tried to speak, but I could not. Then I tried to press his hand to let him know I understood, but I could not. Then I knew what it was to be paralyzed.

The man with the instruments came over and wrung the Blind Man's hand and said, in his bluff way, "Damn it, Emerson, you are a trump—a regular trump. I'll swear I don't see how you stood it. Do you know you and that old darky have held that boy's head there, held that nearly fractured ver-

tebra together for ten days? If you had turned it loose, he would have died in an hour."

"Sh-h-h-h!" whispered the Blind Man. "Isn't he taking more interest in things?"

I felt his hand go over my face in a gentle, sensitive touch.

"You needn't bother about holding it any longer," went on the other. "If he can live ten days with that fracture, the plaster of Paris will do the rest now. But, damn me, Emerson,—you and that old darky!"

Day again, shadowy and sweet, and the tall and beautiful form. Dreams of fields and flowers, of a wood-thrush singing above a sleeping herd. . . . Then winter chilling everything, killing the wood-thrush, killing the flowers. Blast after blast of winter—spasm after spasm of chill.

"This is death," I thought to myself.

And then some one bent over me—some one tall and graceful. I should have known better, but it seemed I had seen the eyes before. It was night, and the moon was shining on them, and I saw the battle there—and the

little locket. And then I could speak for the first time.

"No, no, Thesis, darling,—not good-by, but good-night. Oh, love! Oh, Thesis, will you forgive me?"

Then the Blind Man's voice, "He does not know what he is saying, Miss Bernice."

Day,—but the tall and beautiful form never came again.

I remember that one night my mind suddenly seemed as transparent as glass. As one who awakens from a great sleep, it took on a keenness, an acuteness which was painful in its intensity. There is a great thought in such an awakening. How keen, how acute the mind! How the whole soul quivers as the first sensations of thought creep over it. And the longer and more profound the sleep, the more sensitive the awakening. Aye, at the real Great Awakening, after eons of sleep, how sensitive will the soul be—how keenly will it see the difference between right and wrong! What can keep it from being its own judge?

It was past midnight by the great clock in the corner when I awoke, fully and com-

pletely in possession of my senses again—and yet I awoke with a start and a sense of impending danger. The Blind Man was asleep, bolt upright in a chair. Old Wash was asleep on a rug at my door. The light had gone out, but a bright moon shone full in my window, and its white beams played like noiseless ghosts upon the floor. Did you never have such an awakening in the small hours of the night?

The world is still, your heart beats low and quiet. Not a sound is heard. Not a being is awake but your soul and yourself, and you find your Conscience sitting in solemn judgment on yourself. How strange it is that this small voice will never cease; even in dreams it tells which are right and which are wrong. And now it seems to have awakened you that it might talk to you while all is still, and no one to listen, or interfere to change the solemn proceedings of its tribunal.

How little then become your wildest dreams of wealth, or glory, or honor, or fame. How less than little become your flashes of passion or frets of daily annoyance or clamorings for

imaginary rights or bickerings for self! How small even appear the few good deeds you have done, compared with the solid mountains of those across whose sides you might write, "My mountain of good intentions."

You shut your eyes again only to face the clear painful silence, the calm still inexorable judge, the deep reality of life, and the deeper reality of death. Then it is that you see life as it is, shorn of every folly and false idea, but a plaything you have toyed with. Then it is that you see your soul as it is,—no longer do you doubt it—for it cuts you as a keen razor the hands of a child. And then you see death as it is, its eternal calmness and stillness, its hushing of all earthly vanities and silencing of all earthly conceits. And it shows you yourself as you are—a tremulous sapling among oaks, a speck of clay among planets and suns.

And so in the sudden clearing of mental vision I lay that night for awhile thinking over my past life—thinking and judging until the whirl of emotion was too much to bear, and I sank again into blessed unconsciousness.

But one day I heard, in a dazed sort of a way, the Blind Man telling some one that some one else must be brought, that a great mistake had been made and the other one had gone to Europe. And then I heard him distinctly say,

"God never made but one like her. Why, she loved him all the time, but sacrificed it for another's sake. She will do what I ask her. I'll bring her to-morrow."

The person he was talking to went out. Then he sat down by my side, took my hand and said, softly, for he did not know I was conscious,

"Oh, Ned! Ned! To have won the love you have! God bless you both." There was nobody else in the room, and for the first time in my life I saw him bend his head and weep.

The next day there came a vision brighter than the sun. I knew she was there, though I could not quite understand. My mind was wandering when I first saw the vision. There was a boat and a man in it, light and lightning, troops and troops of beasts and soldiers.

Then things grew calmer, and I heard distinctly the song of a cat-bird, just out of my window, and a great wave of happiness swept through and over me.

"If I can hear him through without forgetting," I said to myself, "I'll know I am alive again—that day has come to stay and night cannot claim me any more."

Never did I listen with more intensity. The song went on. I heard it—I heard it! I could scarcely believe—I saw, I heard!

The sunlight flooded my room. The window was up. There sat the Blind Man, holding my hand. Miss Cynthia was embroidering in a corner. I heard a colt whicker across the lawn. Never had I heard such sweetness.

And the cat-bird sang on.

He sang of love and life, of hope that sits enthroned in happy hearts, of nesting times, trilling, trilling up to the happy stars.

I raised my eyes and looked up — into the eyes of Thesis.

She had slipped in, and stood beside the Blind Man, and was looking down on me.

She saw the conscious rapture that swept over me when I recognized her. She read all the love and suffering that was in my eyes—that I was about to speak—and then she knelt down quickly, threw her arms around my neck, kissed me and said, "Hush, hush, dear heart! I understand."

I saw the Blind Man wince, there was a momentary struggle with myself and then I saw myself as I never had—my cowardice, my pride. And now must I, a wreck and cripple for life, set the seal of my selfishness by accepting this love when I had nothing to give in return?

Only God knew the agony it cost me, when I turned my face to the wall.

She looked at me a moment in startled shame, then fled weeping from the room.

The Blind Man came over to my bedside. He was so agitated he could scarcely speak.

"Ned, I know men who would die to have what you have thrown away."

THE RECOMPENSE.

WE never give, but giving, get again—
There is no burden that we may not bear—
Our sweetest love is always sweetest pain—
And yet the recompense, the recompense is there.

Who weeps, yet worships some sweet silent star
E'en through his tears shall catch uplifting light—
(We grow to what our aspirations are—)
Look up, O Soul, and be a star to-night.

Who pours his heart out to some flower rare
On scaleless cliff above a sailless sea,
Shall drink its perfume, if he linger there,
Until his very soul that flower shall be.

Who bares his head where God's star-altars rise

And strives to probe with prayer their mys-
tery,
Even with the act claims kindred with the
skies—
We are the Wish of all we will to be.

Who loves his love through death and riftless
ruth
Yet ne'er shall clasp and kiss her in his leal
Shall wedded be in spirit and in truth—
We are the Deed of all we think and feel.

We never give, but, giving, get again—
There is no burden that we may not bear—
Our sweetest love is always sweetest pain,
And yet the recompense, the recompense is
there.

CHAPTER XIII.

AFFLICTION is the lightning that clears the sky of our life. After it, comes the ozone of clearer seeing, of healthier living.

The Blind Man was my greatest comforter. He never left me—he and old Wash. It touched me greatly to see them always around me, day and night, always cheerful and so always cheering me. For our lives are manifold, not single. What we live often decides what others shall live.

And old Wash—it was pathetic to see how interesting he tried to be.

"I tell you, Ned," laughed the Blind Man one day, "you and I will be greater chums than ever. You cannot walk and I cannot see. So I will carry you and you shall see for me."

Cannot walk! I had not thought of it in all its subtle, excruciating keenness before. I,

who so loved to walk. No more to go into the fields, to see the sweet things of nature, to study the birds. To lie here a helpless cripple in a world of action—I, who had been so active.

This had been my life. Now God had turned it right about. The old, full life must go,—go with all its strength and manhood, go with all its dreams, go—and with it—Thesis.

The Blind Man's hand was on my brow. I held it and kissed it. Then I shed tears, the first in many years.

But old Wash looked at us both in his funny, philosophical way, winked at me and said,

"G'way frum heah, wid all dat grave-yard talk. I've seed game hosses break down befo'. All you need is a rest, an' den a run on blue-grass. Lor', ef de sperrit's dar, de legs 'll follow."

Then he'd slip out and bring Marjorie up, hooked and booted, and let me see her go a bit across the green. It would end in his driving her to my window, where I'd give her the lump of sugar I always kept for her. The old man would sit in the sulky with all the dignity

of a great driver. He would gravely fleck his whip and look positive and sure. Then he'd wink at me again as he drove off and say,

"It's betwixt grass-time and hay-time wid you now, an' kinder blue, to-be-sho', but befo' de snow flies agin, jes' see ef I don't hab you up an' drivin' dis very filly."

I did not hear anything about Thesis. I knew she was teaching a music class in Nashville. The Blind Man told me that much.

One day—it seemed a long time, because I could do nothing but watch the days come and go—I dictated a letter to Bernice. She was in Europe, and I had heard how her great beauty had attracted all. Her reply came promptly. It was what I had expected, and all I had wished. It was of many pages and fulsome and complete.—My ring came with it. She did not say it in so many words, but between the lines I read,

"Marriage is a civil contract and one in which each contracting party should have value received. I am sorry for you and so—good-by."

That night I slept with another envelope

under my pillow. It was not even sealed, and contained only the programme of a music recital, directed to me in a well-known handwriting. Down in one corner was signed, simply,—"Thesis."

But it seemed that all life and hope came back to me that night. For the first time in weeks I wanted to live. Then all the old fire and ambition of life came back, and I resolved to live.

When the Blind Man came in he must have noticed the difference in me, for he said,

"That's right, Ned. Resolution is half the battle." Then he went on,

"Do you know I wrote a poem once? Not much of a poem, perhaps, but it was the day after I knew I was blind, and it all came over me so. I had to write this to keep from giving up."

He walked over to my bedside and drew out a worn manuscript of three pages from his pocket. Across it were scribbled some lines running in all directions, for there was no light behind the hand that guided them. The pathos of it brought tears to my eyes.

"I wrote that poem," he said, "the first and the only one I shall ever write. Poems are born in one, not made, and each is a different birth—the birth of a soul. For if they come from the soul they must be part of it. Real poets have these soul-births often, and so give to the world these many children of their genius. But all of us—the most insignificant and unpoetic of us—have them once, at least, in a life-time. We may not even give it birth, and it may die between a sob and a shout. It may be only a memory, the shadow of a lingering, the vision of a regret, the dim recollection of something we cannot even remember, but it will come to sweeten and touch us—to be ours."

He was silent a while, then he said, "When the light went out of my life this was born to me. And it has been my inspiration ever since."

I took the manuscript and read aloud :

SUCCESS.

"'Tis the coward who quits to misfortune—
'Tis the knave who changes each day,—
'Tis the fool who wins half of the battle,
Then throws all his chances away.

"There is little in life but labor,
And to-morrow may find that a dream,—
Success is the bride of Endeavor,
And Luck but a meteor's gleam.

"The time to succeed is, when others,
Discouraged, show traces of tire,—
The battle is fought in the homestretch,
And won—'twixt the flag and the wire."

I knew then why the Blind Man was so brave.

But despite my resolution, the weeks passed wearily, and still I lay helpless and broken-spirited. Had it not been for my love of birds and their visits to me then,—in the trees around my windows, down in the grass by the house, singing, chirping, cheering me,—I think I should have died or given up. For try as I would, I could barely lift my head, and not at all either of my limbs on one side. I believe the birds knew it and sent word to all the other birds, from the way they seemed to assemble and sing around my window.

I do not think I ever should have gotten up at all, if old Wash had not come in one day, picked me up and set me in a big chair by the

window, in my dressing gown and slippers. How sweet the fields looked! How like old friends the hills that stretched along the Mount Pleasant country! I felt as if they were welcoming me up, and from their great sturdy sides and everlasting, never-changing summits, I drew in again the spirit of their souls. How beautiful it was, how calm and trustful and true!

In the great sweetness of it all there burst suddenly on me a flood of the richest melody. I could hear it, but I could not see the musician. It seemed to come from everywhere —I knew the singer who gave it forth, and the white oak tree he was in, but the mocking-bird, like all true singers, is so unpretentious in his make-up, and so near the color of nature generally, that I could scarcely tell him from the big honest limb he was sitting on. But I knew well enough, too, why his music seemed to come from everywhere—he draws it from everywhere, and he never pours it out twice in the same direction.

Oh, he is the true singer! Watch him just a moment and see, while his little gray throat

swells and puffs and rolls like miniature billows, and his flashing eyes, "in a fine frenzy rolling," dart about here and there, now at the earth, and now at the heaven above him, notice how his little head moves from side to side, pouring his song in every direction and varying it to suit every new and beautiful sight that flashes across the threshold of the tiny chambers in his eyes. It is almost comical to see how earnest he is—not merely to sing, but to sing some new thing. And so he takes in both Earth and Heaven, and involuntarily pours out the impression that he sees.

"You are the true poet," I said, as my heart swelled up at the lesson he was teaching me—"You are the true singer. Spring has been glorious, but it has passed now, and you are not to sing of spring until your song becomes a spring joke among the other birds. The heavens are blue, but you don't dwell on them always. The fields are green and sunshiny and beautiful, but only a glint of them has crept into your music. Your mate died in the terrible freeze of last winter and that tender flutter of crape in your song is just enough

to draw me to you. Had you hung out your black flag, as some folks do who imagine they are mourning thereby for the dead, or poured your misery between me and the sunshine, I would shut my ears and tell you to go and mate with a black-bird."

But oh, what a singer you are! A little of the fields, a June waft from the air, a glint from the sunshine and a gleam from the skies. A memory of a dead love, a quaint shaft of musical satire, a withering take-off on some cat-bird, who thinks he too is a singer and has tried to imitate you, and a jolly laugh at the foibles of man. Twinkles, jests, raptures, dreams; dances, song, brooks, flowers; sermons, poems, music, stars—and all, all of it, —heaven!

The sweetness and beauty of it all came over me. I felt that, to me, no more were to be the fields and the birds and the sweet things of nature, and yet I was never so happy. For I thought of Thesis and her love for me, and out of the night of my sorrow there arose and shone the sweet star of my recompense.

But one day, when the Blind Man came into my room, he wore a strange and troubled look.

"Ned," he said, "I fear the devil is to pay with Colonel Philips."

"Tell me about it," I said, "for you know I do not hear much that is going on." The Blind Man thought awhile, and then he brought his fist down in a way that is not at all like him, except when he is very greatly in earnest.

"If there is a villain unhung," he said after a while, "it is Joe Forde. I believe, Ned, he is at the bottom of a scheme that is going to wreck Colonel Philips—wreck him from land to life. His home has been deeded to Forde, and I learn that all the old man's bank stock went with it."

I tried to rise in my bed, so great was my astonishment.

"What does this mean?" I asked, as a terrible suspicion went through my mind.

"It means," said the Blind Man, springing up in excitement that was not natural to him —"it means"—then he stopped short, came

over to my chair, seized me eagerly by the hand, and said, "Ned, my boy, you must get up from there, and get up quick. I am going to need you, and need you badly. No living man can help me but you ; and a life, aye, two lives are at stake."

"You don't mean to tell me that she——"

I tried to get up, but fell back,—powerless. I could not even finish the thought that rushed through my brain. Nor could the Blind Man hear me out. He turned and left the room. But as he left, I saw an expression on his face I had never seen before. I knew then that the Blind Man, when aroused, was a dangerous enemy.

THE DREAM OF A MELODY.

O, LET me sit and listen—nay, not speak—
No unanointed sound shall enter here,
Nor uninvited guest of discord seek
To break the sweet communion.—Love, I fear
Scarcely to breathe, lest I might shake
Too soon from starry bowers
The music blooms that hang above this lake
Of flowers.

That hang above or float through wind-blown wood,
Faint, blended sounds of mist and melody—
Echoes of heart-aches, dreams not understood
Till death shall read for each the mystery.
Sobs from the Silent Land—memory of mother eyes
Caught in lambent ray of love,
As earth-lakes catch the glory of the skies
From those above.

A Summer Hymnal

Tone-dreams stealing through the garden of
the mind,
Chord-rays blending in a blaze of harmony—
A thought—a touch—and lo! the list'ning
wind
Leaps from the stars and mantles earth with
melody.
For every dream we waft up to the sky
Through blight and bar,
Down here, tho' but the echo of a sigh,
Up there—a star.

Light—light—light—and the breaking dawn
Shall purple yet the midnight of our dream.
We live in thought here—yonder, in a morn
Whose sun is sound and mellow music's
beam,
Whose nights are notes of singing stars that
roll
In chords around,
Until is wed the concord of our soul
To that of sound.

Light—light—light—and the Minor's wail
Shall sound not down the key-board of our
heart,

The Dream of a Melody

For hope shall tear with Major hands the veil
And turn our sobs to flute-notes ere they start.
And every song that Sorrow's lips have sung
Through hot tears mute,
Shall fall back laughing in our lap, and flung
Like ripened fruit.

Then dream and weep and weep and dream again,
And tell in touch what may not be by tongue:
Our loftiest notes yet in our lutes remain—
Our sweetest songs have never yet been sung.
No dream is lost—no vision e'er will die—
From star to star,
We step across the threshold of the sky
To worlds afar.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE love of woman surpasses that of man. It is the one divine thing of earth—the thing in it that is of Heaven and has its birth among the stars. And as a woman has only one soul, so can she have only one love. Often, indeed, that soul lives, and, like some pure white single star, passes from morn to noon, and from noon into its twilight, and finds no companion-love to go with it. But think you not it is mateless. For the love is there, and the divinity of such a love can find its counterpart only among the stars.

No one's music appealed to me as did that of Thesis. Her's alone seemed to satisfy all that was musical within me. I hold this of music as of poetry—that every one has one melody within and which is his very own. Who touches it touches all that is musical in his nature. Sometimes it is a grand strain ; often

it is a simple childhood tune. But the one touches as completely as the other. When the bud bursts and the perfume comes, it matters not whether the rose is the cultured flower of the hot-house or the wild one that blooms over the wayside fence. Each gives all it has, and the rest depends on him who plucks it.

And so there was that about Thesis' playing which satisfied all that was musical within me. As the days passed I thought of her more and more. I longed for her with an inexpressible, a painful longing. The road over the hills, as I looked at it from my window, became a sacred thing to me, because she once had passed over it. Yonder by the garden gate she once stood—I could have knelt and kissed the spot. That white-oak—she once said it was beautiful ; to me it was now divine.

The days passed. Her name was too sacred for me to speak to others, and so no one spoke it to me.

But one day I noticed that Miss Cynthia seemed mystified and serious. I knew she wished very much to say something, to have something explained to her, but she said

nothing. Twice she came in and twice went nervously out of my room. Once I saw her looking and listening intently at the library door, within which was the piano where Thesis had so often played. Suddenly she started quickly, and for the third time left the room with no explanation. I do not know why I thought it, for was not Thesis at that time in another city? But if she—

My heart thrilled as with the flush of a winged joy—indeed, indeed, it was her touch on the keys in the next room—the old touch—the old melody that filled my soul. It came again, this far-off sweetness in which Chopin poured out his heart. My head sank on my breast. I wept. An hour passed. The music died away and left me weeping.

The love of woman surpasses that of man—aye, it passeth man's understanding. It despises words and is silent. It is best told in a dream, in a song, in a melody, a separation, a sacrifice. And a woman writes it in the path of her life as the stars write the journey of their hearts in the pathway of the milky-way.

THE SECRET OF THE HILLS.

O FAR-AWAY hills, faint, far-away hills,
Will you tell me the secret you hold ?
What dreaming day lulled by the twinkle of rills,
Lies asleep in your mellow and mold ?
What Summer-time sent from the long, long ago,
What Spring tides of pleasure that bubble and flow,
What laughter from lips that are cold ?

O far-away hills, faint, far-away hills,
Will you give me the solace you hold ?
The dream-bordered solace of memory's mills,
The tinkle of bells in the fold—
The hush-time of evening, the lush-time that fills,
The child-days that never grow old—
O far-away hills.

CHAPTER XV.

I SEEM to remember only one great desire during those days of despair and suffering. I did not care to be strong again for myself, the blow had fallen too heavily and time had reconciled me to it—fixed in me the thought that it could never be otherwise. I did not care to be well again to make money, to fight life's battle, nay, not even to walk over the fields again, to ride over the hills, in the strength and sweetness of health and youth. But just to be well again, that I might find Thesis, go to her, and offer her again the love of a strong man.

Day after day and week after week, I sat at my window and looked across the blue hills toward Nashville.

There is nothing in all nature so comforting, so restful, and yet so awe-inspiring to me as

the eternal silence and solitude that seems to hang over the distant hills. Who lives among them, in their far-away homes? Is that blue veil that hangs over them but the reflection of sunlight like ours, or is it the curtain of an unsolved, unexplored land where only memories live? If I might go to them, slip off from the main road that leads over them, and penetrate their innermost recesses, their very heart of hearts, would the veil be withdrawn to me, would they give up the secret of their rest and sweetness, or would they point me still further on, would they send me sadly away and bid me seek it from those, their comrades, still further off, resting also in their solitude and silence? Would the mystery of it never be solved?

Oh! hills—oh, life! that we must wander and stumble onward trying to lift the curtain that droops across the face of the future, to solve the mysteries of the life to be, seeking, seeking ever to penetrate the land of silence that we may find rest, seeking and wandering on, only to find, when we reach it, the curtain withdrawn, and that which was to be the roof-

tree of our soul, but the reflected light from the shadows of our own sun!

Oh, hills—oh, life!

But one day I found it harder than ever to bear, for as I looked across the hills, I saw the first crimson streak in the leaves of the forest. Then the birds began to migrate, and my heart sank within me—oh, if they would only not leave me!

The cat-birds left early. I mourned within myself that morning when I saw them no more in the cherry trees, now nearly bare.

"When you came in the Spring," I thought, "how different life seemed to me.

"Now—now——"

The migration of the birds is one of the most wonderful of things. Few of us see or notice it, we are so busy with our own affairs. But all the law of nature, all the harmony of the spheres, is involved in this bird instinct.

Some went South, passing in pairs or groups, paying me little neighborly visits as they went, stopping a day or two to sing and flit about, to sing their farewell songs and be social and friendly. These little ones must be watched

closely if you would enjoy their brief visits. They come from the far North, and are strangers in a strange land. But they make themselves so much at home, one is apt not to notice them, or to suppose they are the same little friends that have been with us all Summer. Others go by in strange nervous flocks, resting but a moment in the tall trees, or sweeping onward toward the reeds and rushes of a far-away Southern home. The bobolink, with his gorgeous summer plumage changed to the modest gray of his little wife—for now he is gregarious, and must not be a target for the eye of his enemy—scarcely stops to bid us good-day, ere he is gone again. The red-wing black-bird cannot change his plumage, but must devise other though quite ungallant means; and so the males travel Southward as they came Northward in the Spring—in one flock, the females in another.

Thus they all left me, all but the swallows. I knew they too were going soon, because they congregated in one great chimney at Lynwood, and soared and swept and twittered around in the pure, clear Autumn air, as if

trying their wings for their distant flight. One morning, after an unusually noisy convention the afternoon before, I heard them no more, and so I knew that they too were gone.

And thus they all went but the mocking-bird. Game, brave fellow that he was, he stayed to sing and cheer me through the long Winter months.

It was due to old Wash's persistence that I was allowed to sit up at all. He would beg and coax me, as if I were a little child, to try to walk, to try to raise my hand. But try as I would, one side remained weak and helpless.

One day,—I shall never forget it,—it was about three weeks before Marjorie was to be shipped North to make the great race of her life. Marvellous were the tales the old man had told me of her great speed, and how in the Ten Thousand Dollar Purse in which she was entered there was nothing that could out-foot her.

"Oh, she's oil in de can, boss—oil in de can," he would say.

He was exercising her that morning, and

drove up to my window. She nickered when she saw me, and turned her big brown eyes, so full of human sympathy, on me. Hooked to my light speed wagon! I wondered what the old man meant. In a few minutes I learned, for he came in without a word, lifted me as if I had been an infant, and placed me in the cart. Then he got in beside me, holding me with one hand and driving the filly with the other, turned her head and sped away to the track. The air rushed into my lungs as she flew along. I felt the old tinge come back, my old spirit and fearlessness. Yet I clung to him as a babe to its mother.

Wheeling into the track, he gave her her head; but I could see he was watching me very closely, and I thought I detected an amused look on his quaint old face. I knew he was trying an experiment, but I did not guess what it was, until, stepping the filly to her limit, she seemed fairly to fly. The eighth- and quarter-posts flew by me, the sunshine seemed to shoot through and through me, and the blood pulsed through my heart and body like liquid fire. On—on the filly flew,—her

very breath was fire, her heels the twinkle of a hundred stars.

At the last quarter I saw the old man pull out his watch and snap it. It seemed but an instant, when, with the rushing air scorching my cheeks like blasts of hot ether, and the fence-posts flying by, hand in hand, like dancing ghosts, we rushed under the wire and I heard his watch snap again. I looked at it—it was thirty seconds!

"Wonderful! Wonderful,—Wash!" I exclaimed. "A two minute gait, and drawing two men and a wagon!"

"Jes' watch de next one," he chuckled—"she aint pacin' yit!" And he whispered low and clucked to her. She laughed back with a shake of her head as she felt the lines come taut, and moved away like a flying meteor. The skeleton cart seemed scarcely to touch the ground. In an instant I forgot myself. I was pulsing with blood and excitement, and I reached out, grasped the lines with both hands, and shouted,

"Let me drive her—for heaven's sake let me hold those lines!"

I scarcely knew what I did. I was brought back to myself when I heard the old man shout and felt him throw both his arms around me. But I had the lines and I telegraphed my wish to her sensitive mouth. She seemed proud to know that it was I who could drive her again, and she flew along as she never had before. When we pulled up at the gate, I knew why the old man shouted, why the tears of joy stood in his eyes. For I felt a great wave of life sweep over me and I knew I was myself again.

Tenderly he tried to help me to alight. But I would not have it so ; I stepped from the wagon myself, then sank on the grass and thanked God in prayer. And as I prayed, the sweet tears of thankfulness ran down my cheeks, and through and in them all I saw the vision of another life, and with me one who walked by my side and beckoned me to follow her through fields where nature and sweetness dwelt, through woods where the birds sang, through years where love led on to holier living.

When I arose, the old man was rubbing out

the filly as if nothing had happened. He did not seem to notice that I was there. He was wrapping her up in a blanket as a mother might tuck away her babe.

"Fur she's oil in de can, boss—oil in de can," was all he would say.

I could not speak, but I put both my arms around her neck, and she looked humanly down, her great earnest eyes into mine.

But those first few steps—never before had I felt such a throb of joy!

LITTLE MISS FIDDLE.

DAR now, Banjo!—t'ek yo' sign in,—
Let Miss Fiddle sing her song.
O my h'art—I'm jes' a pinin'—
Come, Miss Fiddle, come along—
Wid yo' gleam of sun in show'rs,
Nights so sweet an' days so ca'mful—
Wid yo' birds an' bees an' flow'rs,
Fetchin' music by de armful!

CHAPTER XVI.

IT was nearly two o'clock in the morning, and yet I could not sleep for very joy.

I walked around the room like a child who, having that day learned the art, now would walk itself to death. I picked up my Indian clubs. I could scarcely lift them, yet how proud I was of my strength! I went to the window and looked across the hills toward Nashville.

"If I might only go to-night—but not yet, my heart—not yet." Finally I could stand it no longer—this wild joy in my heart. Putting on my hat, I slipped out to the old man's cabin. To my surprise his light was burning, and as he opened the door I caught my breath, so gorgeously was he attired.

"In the name of heaven, Wash!"

"Celerbratin', Marster — celerbratin' dis

glo'is day''—and he gave me one of his old-time bows, with a sweep that was grand.

"We'll celebrate together," I said.

The old man needed no further hint. He vanished, and in a short while he brought back a decanter of Tennessee whiskey—he himself had made it for my father, and it was of a vintage of twenty years before.

But as he went off I had laughed at his costume. A spike-tail coat and white satin waistcoat he had worn when he served at President Polk's inauguration. Knee-breeches of green velvet, shiny brass buckles, and white home-knit stockings that looked as if they had come out of the military chest of General Andrew Jackson in the rooms of the Tennessee Historical Society.

"Bar's oil an' cinnermon draps" on his hair —a red silk bandana handkerchief, for a cravat, around his high standing collar,—and low quartered shoes—these completed his attire.

When the old man dressed in that way—a classical renaissance done up in ebony—I knew he meant it as the chiefest of all compliments.

He drank his toast very reverently.

"It's to Little Glory, God bless her!" was all he said.

"You may take another one on that," I said, as I poured him another glassful.

In ten minutes he was in one of his mellow moods, the mood I loved so much in the old darky; I knew he had something rich coming, and I was not disappointed. He went to an old chest and took out his violin. It was an old one—a Stradivarius.

My great-great-grandfather had brought it from England when he first settled in Carolina. It had passed through four generations of us to my father. At his death, because old Wash was, first of all, a musician and his trusted slave and devoted friend, it was given to him; but chiefly because the old man wanted it. And my father also remembered how, during the fights around Atlanta, old Wash, who was his body servant, had ridden down a whole line of the enemy, receiving the fire of every gun, yet miraculously catching no bullet —all to save an old violin left in camp the night before, and the camp in the hands of the

enemy. How he escaped unhurt and brought it through the lines is to this day a wonder.

There were few things I liked more than to hear the old man play. If ever there was a violinist it was he. He seemed to grasp music naturally. He had only to swing his bow and it flowed like a clear mountain stream from the darkened depths within.

He was not a negro fiddler—he was an artist—a musician. In the glow and heat and fever of his passion I have known him to improvise music as grand as any obligato ever composed. But it passed with the breath of it—not a note has remained.

"What is the difference between a fiddle and a violin?" I asked him once.

"De same dif'runce, Marster," he said, "as 'tween de fiddler and de vi'linist."

He brought out his violin, took his seat, unbuttoned his shirt collar, and said,

"I'm gwine co'rt Little Miss Fiddle fur you to-night.

"Now, you musn't co'rt Little Miss Fiddle lak you do eny yudder gal," he went on, "fur she's a gal of sperrit—she's got some

rigernalerty. You musn't be in a hurry, musn't lose yo' haid, an' as you hopes to win her, don't fur heaben sake carry on no flutta-shun wid no yudder gal twell Miss Fiddle is yourn''—he winked. ''She's awful prutty and sweet an' all dat, but man-suh, she's high strung and won't stan' no foolishness 't'all! Uh-ur! Can't hab but one luv wid her.

''But when yo've won 'er, man-suh, she's wurf all de yudder gals in de wurl. No yudder gal in de wurl can drap 'er sweet little haid on yo' shoulder lak she do—jes' so''—and he put his violin lovingly under his chin—''and nestle right up under yo' year, so you kin talk to 'er soft lak, an' kiss 'er cheek and eyes, an' she kin whisper back. Fur you got to make yo' move, you know, by de whisper she sends back. An' dar she jes' lafs back in yo' eyes an' gives you all de chance you want to throw yo' lef arm round 'er sweet little neck an' tickle 'er under de chin wid yo' own tune. Uh-ur! No gal in de wurl lak her.

''Now, take Miss Peanner, f'instunce; man-suh, I don't lak her 't'all. She's too proud and col', allers dressed up in white an'

black, settin' off in her ribbons an' gowns, talkin' bout sassiety and Germany an' all dat; when you co'rt 'er, you got to set off, too, so dignerfied lak, an' sorter feel yo' way 'long, an' then ma'ebbe you hafter thump 'er an' box 'er and bang 'er years befo' she'll talk sweet. An' den she'll tell you jes' whut she'll tell eny yudder feller dat co'rts de same way.

"But de sweet little fiddle she's got a dif-'runt talk fur every feller she luvs, an' de closer you squeeze 'er an' hold 'er to yo' heart an' kiss 'er cheek an' tickle 'er under de chin de sweeter she gwineter talk back to you—man-suh, dat's a fac'! Den arter you done marry dat Peanner gal, she no good. 'Taint long befo' she's stayin' off in a room by herse'f, allers shut off by herse'f in de parlor and wid all her finery on. Makes a prutty good housekeeper, to-be-sho', allers carryin' her keys 'round, an' sech lak. But she jes' can't nachully hang 'round yo' neck 'bout de fiah place, or set in yo' lap lak Little Miss Fiddle.

"An' dar's Miss Git-tar," he went on—"she's no good. Fit only to be along wid sap-

haids an' fools. Can't do nothin' but lay in yo' lap an' look up an' sing luv songs to de moon. Too soft—too soft! Too reddy to fall in lub soon as you tech her.

"De Organ you ax about, sah? Nice, good, 'lig'us ole maid. Still I lak 'er, fur she's mighty fat an' good-nachured an' solumn, an' sings prutty well in de quire ef she don't ketch a cold. Too gloomy, dough; allers thinkin' 'bout death an' runnin' arter funerals an' tendin' distracted meetin's. Nice good ole church worker, but nurver will marry—got too much 'lig'un.

"Miss Banjo? Oh dem golden slippers! Now you heah dis nigger shout! Yaller gal—awful sweet. Cheeks roses an' jes' full ob romance. Got to pinch 'er and tickle 'er a heap to m'ek 'er talk right, but when she do begin to sing, man-suh, she's a lark! Kin sing eny kind o' tune, from Dixie, de tune dat 'ud march Johnny Rebs agin de breastworks ob death, to de sweet lullerbies ob our childhood. Kin m'ek you split yo' sides wid funny songs, or cry lak a baby as she leads you all ober de ole plantashun, whar de ole folks used

to lib. God bless yo' sweet soul, honey, comin' right down to Charley-on-de-spot, you am de gal fur me!

"But de beauty 'bout Little Miss Fiddle she gits better es she gits older. Dis gal ob mine," he added, taking up his violin lovingly and caressing it, "is two hunderd an' thurty-five year ole, an' she gits sweeter an' pruttier es she gits older.

"Now jes' watch me co'rt her," he winked.

He drew his bow, made a flourish, and touched the strings with apparent indifference, but with a keen, quick ear, and watched the effect.

"What's all that for? Why don't you go on and play?"

"Gitten' 'quainted wid her, suh,—tellin' her 'Good ebenin', Madam.' She don't 'peer to know me yit," he went on—"don't seem to want to talk. She's a little col' at fust, but jes' wait till she warms up some. She don't talk love on a col' collar—I've got to whisper in 'er year mighty fine. No, suh, de man don't lib dat kin jes' grab up Little Miss Fiddle on fust 'quain'tunce an' smack 'er

red lips an' m'ek 'er laf an' lay 'er cheek agin his'n and go right off talkin' sweet on fust 'quain'tunce. Listen now—jes' watch 'er talk back to me."

He drew his bow with a quick flourish gently across the strings. "'*I don't know you, suh*,' she sez—Heah dat, jes' es plain es it kin be? '*I don't know you, suh*,' she sez—Huh—er—er! But I knows you, sweetheart—I knows you," he said as his bow began to fly to and fro. "See 'er eyes flash! '*How dare you, suh! How dare you, suh!*' Who-o! but aint she powder an' fiah?

"I'll gin' 'er a little poetry:

> I do not kno' yo' name, 'tis true—
> But dis I kno' to my h'art's own rue
> De sweetis gal in de wurl am you.

Hi—yi—ee! see dat blush? Heah dat little laugh—aint it nachul? Don't you see 'er beginnin' to limber up? Miss Fiddle jes' lak eny yudder gal, she luvs to be called prutty, an' ef you win 'er, you got to do jes' lak you do to all de yudders—lie an' lie an' lie to 'em! Now jes' watch me do it,—bow an' sashay an'

scrape aroun'. Tell 'er I've come way 'cross de ocean jes' to see 'er, an' how 'er blush minds me ob de sunshine on de waves, an' her eyes ob de moonlight on de deep."

I never heard such music. The old man seemed carried away in a tumult of melody. His body swayed under the excitement. His honest old black face shone like a star, and all the time, as he played, he wove in his story.

"Dar now, Darlin'—now we clippin' it—now is de time fur luv. See how de stars smile sorter faint lak in de moonlight an' de shadders round de lake nudge one nudder an' laf across de waves. Heah dat bird ?"—and he imitated the notes of the wood-thrush as perfectly as the bird himself—"dat's de wood-thrush in de lily hedge, dun waked up case his heart is so full ob music an' melerdy he can't sleep, and he jes' bleezter sing to his mate on de nest. Can't you smell de lily flags es de wind blows 'em noddin' so sleepy lak across de lake ? Can't you jes' feel de sweetness all round you under de soft sky lak de bref ob a sleepin' babe under de snug filmy drapery ob de crib ? Lis'n at 'er laffin' at me now, and

den lookin' up at me quick and shy. Oh my sweet Little Miss Fiddle—look out! Ain't you done fin' yo' match?"

Here, to my delight, he improvised a beautiful waltz.

"Lord a mussy! Did you eber? Dun gone to waltzin' wid me erreddy. Oh, dem golden slippers—Oh, dem little feet—how dey do talk! How dey kin step fur dey age! Whut a stately step she's got. Look how she leads in de minuet. Now-suh, she's fairly waltzin' me in de air. Lord, ain't she a warm un? An' now—jes' look—she's pantin' in my arms, wid 'er haid on my breast, lak a run down fawn on de mossy bank ob de creek in de shade ob de sycamo' tree.

"Er—uh! dat's it, is it, Little Miss Fiddle? Gwine gimme nudder heat? Lord, how kin I stan' it? Flesh and blood can't stand dat, an' you red es a rose now an' trimblin' all over. But dar now! Ain't she sweet ernuff to eat? See de little wet curls clingin' round her cheek lak curly clouds round de sky when de sun am settin'; an' now, es she draps into de promernade all see her takin' my arm an'

laffin' an' fannin' hersef. Watch her use dat fan—ain't she a queen ? but wan't dat waltz fine ?

"Come, Little Miss Fiddle, come wid me, gal. De air am cool an' sweet an' de stars am made fur luv'ahs. Come wid me now, an' let us set on de mossy bank ob de lake—close up, gal, close up—so we can talk low and sweet, whils't you look up in my face wid eyes lak stars lookin' up in de black face ob night.

"Don't you heah what I'm sayin' to you ? Hush gal, don't you heah it ? Don't you heah me tellin' you how I luv you ? How all dese years I've luv'd you, whils't de stars look down and laf. How ever sence you was a little gal I've luv'd you, an' nobody but you, an' ef you don't hab me now I'm gwine pine erway, p-i-n-e erway—p-i-n-e e-r-w-a-y an'die! Dar now ! she's cryin' an' sobbin' an' clingin' round my neck an' quiverin' like ten thousand quivers. Her h'art is gone and she quivers lak a bow-strin' when de arrer's done shot."

The note ended in the faintest imitation of a kiss.

"Hi—ho ! jes' look at me now !" he shouted

as he swung his bow and burst from one grand climax into another—"I'm crazy wid luv an' too happy to live. I'm holdin' her in my arms an' kissin' her eyes an' cheek an' mouf. I'm playin' de weddin' march ob de angels on de thunder organ ob all eternity, an' she tremblin' an' laffin' an' cryin' an' blushin' an' white an' red an' pale an' gray.

"Hi—yi—jes' look at me now! Turnin' de air into music, m'ekin' de grass sing, de trees dance, an' de skies laff. Pullin' de stars down fur fiddle-strings, stringin' em up wid beams of sunlight—de blue vault ob heaben fur my fiddle and de rainbow ob promise fur my bow—Glory Halleluyah!"

I left him hugging his fiddle, mopping his face with a red bandana, and reaching for another toast for Little Glory. I left him with such poetry in my own soul as I had never felt before, and such a prayer of happy thankfulness, that in the dark shadow of an oak I dropped to my knees and thanked God that I was a man again.

THE LIGHT REFLECTED.

WE live and laugh,
And know not life's deep seeming—
We live and weep,
And yet we weep in vain.
We live and love—
Aye, strange that from life's dreaming
Comes its true pain.

CHAPTER XVII.

I WAS up at daylight. I felt so full of the new life I could not sleep, and I had been an invalid too long in that room to wish to stay in it longer than the sun permitted. For I had sadly neglected him of late—him and his children of the woods and fields. I was up early, first of all to surprise the Blind Man. So I mounted Alana and rode over to his house. What a glorious thing to ride again, to feel the live horse between your knees, her sensitive mouth braced against the bit, her whole soul respond to yours, and yours respond to every breeze and sunbeam, every bird and bird-note!

To my surprise, Mr. Emerson was already up. He was pacing his veranda in deep study —in fact, in an agitation that was unnatural with him.

I intended to surprise him ; so, slipping from the saddle, I started across the lawn. He had sat down on a bench in the far corner and listened, looking cautiously around. His hearing was very acute, and he had detected the slight noise of my footstep. I stood still until he seemed reassured, then slipped quietly up behind him, intending to seize him in my grasp and give him a royal surprise.

But I did not, for just as I reached him his hand went into his pocket and he drew from his bosom a faded and much thumbed package. It was an unopened letter, directed to him in the girlish handwriting of Thesis, ten years before. He dropped into an undertone conversation with himself, a habit he had, and I heard him say,

"Yes, she wrote this, God bless her ! when she heard I was blind. She was a child then and off at school, but I know what is in it, though I have never read it, and no man ever shall: '*Tem—dear, dear Tem—Oh how sorry I am for you—never to see again—never to see me and the flowers and the skies—I cried about it all last night, and I cannot study to-day. But I love you*

more—we all—all the world will love you more than ever,' . . . . it is all there. I can see it just as plainly as if I had read every word of it —just as plainly. And how is it signed? Let me see—Yes, only one way, always the same way, *'Your own little girl, Thesis.'* It is there, though no eyes have ever seen it—mine cannot, and it is too sacred for any other. Mine cannot now, but they will, some day. For it will be buried with me, and on that great day when I shall awake and see again, I'll—yes, I know I shall—I shall open it and read it first—open it and read it first—

"'Will awake and remember and understand.'"

He put it tenderly away in his pocket. Then he turned over a photograph that went with it—a faded picture, but still it was she, and at sight of it my heart beat wildly. I was ashamed, and endeavored to move away. I had not intended to hear him. I would not look into his holy of holies. I moved to be gone, but a leaf rustled under my footsteps. I stopped, and the Blind Man looked up and listened in wonder. Then he went on again,

"Let me look at it once more. Blind? aye, but I can always see that—the sweetness, the beauty of it would penetrate even sightless eyes. Her eyes have not changed since I saw them last,—great, earnest, unconscious, truthful eyes—and here she is in her short frock and sweet white waist and her school-girl hair over her shoulders. And that smile on those lips! who says that I cannot see," he added aloud—"that I cannot—cannot see—"

He turned pale—then red with shame. "Fool that I am! Oh, Ned, I am unworthy of your friendship—My God! And yet I mean no wrong, I cannot——"

He kissed it and put it again in his bosom. Then he looked up.

There was once a traveller who heard of a barren, rugged volcano in a foreign land—the tallest, grandest, most rugged, and yet most barren mountain of any land—under the scorching sun of a tropical desert, where not a blade or leaf could put forth the heart that was in it. For hundreds of miles around there was nothing but the hot sands below and the

fierce sky above, and nothing on all the landscape to break this dead monotony of the dead —nothing save this lofty, barren mountain, itself the crown of all the death around it. And no man had ever scaled it, no man had ever reached its summit to look down into its sightless sunken crater. No man except this traveller, who, when he heard of it, went many miles and crossed many seas to reach it. And when he saw it, the mountain held him with a strange fascination; and he camped for weeks at its base, and he loved it as he never had loved any mountain before. By day he would look at it in wonder, its summit piercing the hot vaults of heaven, lost in the infinite blue. And by night he would go out and worship with it, for a thousand diamond-peaked stars seemed to cluster around its top where the heavens rested upon it. At last the traveller could resist no longer, and he resolved to climb to its very top and look down into its heart of hearts. It took him many days to do it, days of toil and thirst and labor. But one evening, just as the sun was setting, he gained its height and knew its secret, for there, bub-

bling up from its crater-heart, poured the purest and most beautiful of streams, so deep and pure that the tiniest pebbles could be seen hundreds of feet below in its depths. And the sweet moisture from the stream had caused many-colored flowers of the rarest and most beautiful hues to grow in every crevice of the scarred and rugged crater, filling the air with sweetness and fragrance, until, as the enraptured traveller looked down upon them, they seemed to be one vast bouquet in a vase of granite and gold. And the setting sun caught up its splendor, and from the side where the stream burst forth crowned it all with a rainbow of light.

The Blind Man was weeping.

It was an hour before I rode back again. I slipped from the saddle and seized him in my arms. "Oh, Ned! Ned!" And "God be praised!" was all he could say.

AND I would weep for thee, thou monarch
of the wood,
Thou king that long the scorn of Time hast
stood.
King by the royal right of strength alone—
With star-crowned head bared to the circling
zone—
Of good deeds done, of sweetness and of mirth,
Scion of the sun, defender of the earth—
O, I would weep for thee.

And I would mourn for thee, aye, truly mourn,
For what thou wast and all that thou hast borne.
Brother to the skies, companion to the hills,
Comrade of the clouds and mother of the rills,
Gatherer of dews, garnerer of herb and flowers,
Guardian of the muse in trysting, twilight
hours—
O, I would mourn for thee.

And I would honor thee for what thou'st done,
Scorner of winter's wind and summer sun,
Builder of birds' nests, brewer of bubbling pool,
Painter of shadows dark on landscape cool,
Wafter of odors sweet on summer's breeze.
Turner of winter's sleet and biting freeze—
O, I would honor thee.

And I would reverence thee, thou hoary one,
Thou who hast stood while centuries have run,
Thou who hast seen the Indian lover stand
While virgin morn smiled down on virgin land—
The ax, the rifle of the pioneer—
All these have passed, and all had left thee here—
And I would reverence thee.

O, Ax of Traffic, buzzing Saws of Trade,
Dost think for thee alone the Earth was made?
For thee, to garner clean her fields of corn,
With barren hills to greet the babe unborn?
For thee, to glutton in her sweet-stored wine
And leave no grape on fainting Future's vine?

—*Traffic.*

CHAPTER XVIII.

IT was early in the afternoon when the Blind Man came to my room. Now I did not wish to see him just then, because in another hour I would have been on my way to Nashville. For the one great overpowering impulse of my heart was to see Thesis as soon as I could.

But he looked determined and quiet, and I said nothing of my proposed visit.

It was some time before he seemed to wish to talk. Then his manner was so stern, and different from his old way, that I felt abashed in his presence.

"Ned," he said, after a while—"I wish you to go a little journey with me to-night. I have got at the bottom of all this thing, but I want you to hear it yourself—I have been wanting to tell you for a month," he went on quietly,

"ever since that morning I told you of the transfer of Colonel Philips's bank stock to Forde,—but I have waited until you were strong enough to help me."

I rose and gripped his hand. "How is that for a paralyzed man?" I asked.

He smiled. "Oh, that's all right. But I mean strength in a different way. The weakest man I ever saw could toss a bale of cotton. Don't ask me any questions now. Have the mare ready at ten o'clock."

"Any time you name," I said, "and no questions asked."

It was just ten when we turned the mare's head up the Mount Pleasant pike. "Drive to St. John's Church," was all he said.

There are few roads more beautifully surrounded than the Mount Pleasant pike, threading across a country as fertile as ever the crow flew over. Two miles out of town the Bigby Creek dashes across it, under a rustic bridge, at a place and in such a quaint romantic bend that the impulse to stop and drink from a cold spring that bursts from a lime-rock crevice on its bank is almost irresistible. Further on the

pike winds around stately and sombre hills, casting their cool shadows askant, or throwing them in gloomy dignity across the road which winds around them.

Just over the rise of the hills lies the beautiful old estate of Ashwood—the ante-bellum home of the Polks, but now passed into the hands of others, its broad acres divided and subdivided to meet the encroachments of a narrower age, its beautiful old trees now encircled by "the deadly girdle," and standing in the moonlight, leaning, limbless monuments of a happier time. I was glad the Blind Man could not see it, for it hurt me. I who had seen them in their beauty and glory—now to behold them fall a victim to the mercenary spirit of some would-be wheat- and-potato king.

To the left of the road stands the deserted old church, in all its sacred sweetness—so sacred that even the speculative spirit of the wheat-smut and potato-bug has passed it by—and so it remains amid its venerable trees and sacred dead, kneeling among its evergreens, in perpetual communion with God—a sacred altar in the wilderness, an ark of the past

undesecrated by the touch of the unholy hand of the present.

It was a beautiful night, and the full moon lit up every tomb, until I could almost read the epitaphs where I sat in the deep shadows of the evergreens.

The Blind Man was quiet and I said nothing. I did not know what he meant, and as the hours passed by I grew nervous and excited.

A screech-owl came out and sat shivering on the limb of a near-by oak. The distant bark of a cur from a negro cabin was added to the weird notes of the bird. Then I heard the rattle of a buggy on the pike. It stopped at the gate, then in and down to a clump of evergreens. Two men got out, one of them unsteadily, and walked across the yard. As they came out into the moonlight, I recognized them and clutched the Blind Man's arm.

"It is Joe Forde and Colonel Philips," I whispered. The Blind Man nodded—"I knew it," he said—"Be quiet and let us see."

Colonel Philips walked unsteadily. But Forde walked in his cool, cold way.

"Colonel Philips is drinking but Forde is sober," I whispered to the Blind Man.

He nodded again. "Forde is too cold-blooded a scoundrel to drink," he said. "He doses his wits with wine and his conscience with cold lemonade. He needs all his brains for his own villainy."

They came across the yard to the shadow of a Norwegian spruce under which a slab, over a tomb, shone white in the brilliant moonlight. The elder man stumbled over a grave and fell sprawling.

"Get up," said Forde gruffly—"I am surprised that a man of your age and sense will drink. You are in a place where you will need all the brains you have got," he added brutally.

"You know as well as I do," said the older man doggedly, "that I never drank to excess until you got me into this embezzling."

"Well, I'll give you a chance to-night to win your money back," laughed Forde.

"If I could get even with you and place that money back in bank—that money I have used in gambling with you—I'd never play

another game of cards or take another drink," said the other.

"May be you will to-night," Forde replied seductively.

They lit cigars, placed a silk handkerchief over the corner of the tomb, sat on the grass and soon began to play. I noticed that the money Colonel Philips drew from his pocket was in large rolls. He drew out a large bill and threw it down—Forde covered it and the game of poker was soon on. It was well that the Blind Man and I were so well concealed; for I had only to look through the tangled shrubbery to see the players within ten feet of us. So interested and excited they were, that they made not a sound. Often their cigars went out—three times in an hour I saw Forde relight his. Suspecting no one at such an hour and in such a place, they paid no attention to anything but the game, as they threw down bill after bill on the pile and played on with varying gain or loss. I myself grew so excited that I sat gripping the Blind Man's hand. He seemed to fear I would make some noise, for he gripped my

hand in return, while every now and then he would whisper,

"Look! Listen! And be quiet, Ned—be quiet and listen!"

The silence was broken by Colonel Philips: "I am five thousand dollars ahead, Forde," and he took a drink from a silver flask that lay by his side in the moonlight. "Guess I'll do you up to-night."

Forde smiled and played on. Another hour went by, and the pile of bills on the tomb now contained all Colonel Philips had. It had started with a thousand dollars, but each had "seen" the other and "put up," until, as Colonel Philips threw in his last bill, he added recklessly,

"And now I call you—that ten thousand is mine to-night."

I was watching Forde closely—I saw him slip a third card from the gaiter of his shoe, as he sat with his feet drawn up under him. One of the cards in his hand took its place and he threw down his hand and exclaimed,

"Not unless you can beat that hand!" Colonel Philips looked at it, threw down his

cards and staggered to his feet. "Let us go," he said.

Forde thrust the bills into his outer coat-pocket and said, "Wait, let me talk to you a minute. You said you would like to get even with me. You know there is one way you can."

"You lied to Bernice about that once before," said Colonel Philips hotly—"and you lied to her. You knew he was not in love with Bernice, and you made Thesis believe it. You knew her unselfish nature, her self-sacrificing way, and that she would——"

"You do not mean that I lied," said Forde, turning pale with anger. "You mean that I was mistaken."

"No, I mean just what I say," said Colonel Philips defiantly—"you lied! I am ashamed of the little I had to do with it, and I tell you now I'd rather see her dead than married to you."

I looked to see Forde strike him, for he clenched his fist, and his eyes fairly blazed in the moonlight.

I half arose, but I felt the Blind Man's grip on my arm.

"Let me loose," I whispered—"if he strikes that old man I'll kill him where he stands!"

"Be quiet, Ned, be quiet," whispered the Blind Man as he held me back, "be quiet and watch him."

"Come," went on Forde, "we may as well be plain—all that is past. The bank is already wrecked—there is not ten thousand dollars in the vaults, and if it fails you know who embezzled it and where you will land. She will marry me to save you—you know she will. It is true you embezzled the deposits, and the cash balance will show that you have gambled off two hundred thousand dollars. It is true also that I have won it from you. But I haven't spent a cent of it, and I will replace it all, saving the bank and saving you if you will help me to force her to marry me. This thing can't run on but a day or two longer,"—he added significantly, "and then ——"

Colonel Philips moved off toward the buggy. Forde turned as if to follow him, then he stopped and watched the old man until he had staggered out of sight.

And now I was so indignant that I felt nothing should restrain me. I tried to spring up and confront him, but the Blind Man's iron grip was on my arm.

"Be quiet, Ned, for her sake," he whispered. "Be quiet and watch him now, for it is this we have come for—this is the most important of all. Watch him—watch him—for I cannot see, you know—watch him—what he does next."

Forde stood looking until he thought himself alone. Then, slipping by one of the tombs, he cautiously raised the half broken top and took out a safe-deposit box. For a moment he looked cautiously around, then placed the bills in it, the box back in the tomb, and followed Colonel Philips.

I sat in astonishment and wonder until I heard the buggy-wheels go down the pike, and die away in the distance. Then I stepped quietly over, raised the broken top of the tomb and brought the box to the Blind Man.

It took us a half-hour to count the money—"nearly two hundred thousand dollars," I said.

"Just what I expected, Ned," he answered gently. "We have saved the bank and Colonel Philips, too, to-night. You see," he explained, "this thing has been going on for a year or two. Forde first got him to deal in futures. Both of them used the funds of the bank for that, expecting, as all embezzlers do, to replace it, and, as all gamblers do, to win thousands for every hundred used. But Forde won and Philips lost. To regain his losses, Forde, whom I have known to be a gambler all his life, has led him to cards, inducing and enticing him to use the funds of the bank, and beating him fairly or foully. A weak man to begin with, Colonel Philips has added the folly of drink to the rest of it, and so has become an easy prey for Forde. Now," he said rising, "now to save him. Did you hear his cold-blooded proposal, Ned? And he will stop at nothing to accomplish it. But we shall see—we shall see."

We had driven half-way back to town when the Blind Man broke the silence by saying, "Ned, there is but one place to put this money until we can act. It is in a small cave under

the river bluff. Let us drive to the Slanting Rock."

Where the bold little river cuts through the solid limestone at a bend just east of the town, a huge rock, ages and ages ago, perhaps, fell from the cliff above and plunged diagonally into the river. Its base resting half-way across the river down amid the mussels in their pearl caskets, its top fallen, but resting on the river's bluff, often concealed from view by high water, it makes a dangerous and fatal suck-hole and maelstrom under which the water rushes with terrific force. Here many a bold swimmer in the past, to my own knowledge, had lost his life, and here I had often loved to sit and listen to the roar of the water, grumbling sullenly at the indignity offered it, in being forced to pass under the yoke of this giant tyrant from the hills.

There was a small and utterly secluded cave in the rocks above. Wild vines and lichen grew over its mouth, and in wet weather a tiny spring trickled down into the river. The money there would be safe, known to but

two, and in vaults that knew not fire nor thieves. The Blind Man was holding the box until I found the little cave. I had stood for a moment just above the river where the Slanting Rock lay, on a slight projection of stone and clay. The moon was just setting, and the clouds had banked grimly in the West, throwing fantastic shadows across the water, which, owing to the recent heavy rains, rushed with greater force and roared with louder voice as it whirled and dashed above and plunged under the Slanting Rock. I remember how quickly I took in the beauty of the night and the splendor of the unharnessed stream. Just across was the little bridge that spanned Jackson's Spring, where once, in the long ago, the doughty old hero had stopped and quaffed. The fertile valley bend stretched away in front where Schofield's army thundered across in its retreat to Nashville, and here, on the bluff where I stood, Hood's batteries had sent screaming, defiant shells into the Northern ranks. The top of the old mill rose above the cliffs still further up the stream, and the glitter of the sheen of silver water could be seen as

it rolled over the dam like a web of finest silk from the great loom of waters beyond. Perhaps the picture made such an impression on me because it came so near being the last.

I heard the Blind Man say,

"Be careful, Ned—you may make a misstep"—and before I realized, I had fallen into the water. My right arm was numbed by the fall, my left side appeared weak and helpless. The suck-pool caught me up as if I had been a feather, and shot me towards the death-trap in the Slanting Rock. I remember only a silent prayer, the vision of a fair neck with a little locket around it. I struggled, but I was helpless.

"Ned! Ned!" I heard him exclaim as he rushed coatless to the water's edge.

"Here! Here!" I shouted as the suck-pool spun me around—around and around as a lion would play with a mouse.

I heard a splash in the river just as my hand went up and clutched a point in the Slanting Rock, and though the swirling water carried my body out and around—around and around—until it seemed that my grip would be wrested

from the rock, I still held on and shouted, "Here! Here!" in answer to the "Ned! Ned!" that came to me over the water.

The Blind Man was a capital swimmer and an athlete in strength, but he swam in the dark. He breasted the waves and dashed the whirlpool from him as if it had been a seashore bath, and as he battled with and breasted it his cheery voice rang out anon, "Ned! Ned!" —and I answered back and clung for life.

Twice he went past me in the dark—twice I saw the waters whirl him around as if he had been a straw, and then his great strength would tell, and he would right about as a ship in a gale. But it was a midnight battle with him—a blind fight in blind waters—and even in my peril, expecting every moment to be swept into the jaws of the Slanting Rock, the superb heroism of those blind eyes, struggling sightless and without a chart amid rocks that threatened his life, in waters that tried his strength, all to save my own life, came over me with a wave of admiration that made me grip yet more tightly the rock and call back in the dark—"Here! Here, I am!"

I was lying on the Slanting Rock when I remembered again, and the Blind Man was sitting by my side with his finger on my pulse.

"A narrow escape for us both," he said, as he helped me to rise. "I have been in that hole before, when I could see where I was swimming, but that swim in the dark—that thought that you had been swept under this rock and it was useless——"

The last rays of a golden moon, setting over the river's bluff, lit up his face with a light that seemed not of earth, but of heaven. Then he laughed merrily and shook the water from his locks. I looked up into his face as we arose to go, and to this day I have never seen the moon go down

"Like a golden goblet falling
And sinking into the sea,"

but I have instinctively looked into the skies above, since I can no longer see it on earth, and there beheld again that brave, unselfish face, and around it a holy hero-light that shall never die.

"And forever and forever,
As long as the river flows,

As long as the heart has passion,
As long as life has woes;

"The moon and its broken reflection,
And its shadows shall appear,
As the symbol of love in heaven,
And its wavering image here."

THE PICTURE OF A ROSE.

THOU art the dream of Nature when she sleeps
And dreams of youth-time and sweet April's eyes,
And slumbering now, lo! round her breast there creeps
This pictured vision of departed skies;—
Departed skies, concaved, with clouds of snow,
Cerulean depthed that left us long ago.

And thou art Nature's memory when she wakes,
All conscience-clear and weeping o'er the past,
Clear visioned, keen, her yearning soul partakes
Of that which was, but was too pure to last.
And so she holds, with soft light breaking low,—
Holds to her heart the hopes of long ago.

CHAPTER XIX.

ACROSS the pike from Lynwood is the cottage home of my neighbor, Mr. Truxton. He is a nurseryman, and his apple and pear orchard is now yellow and red with ripening fruit. I always liked Truxton, a quiet, gentle fellow, with ways like an old maid, and as prim and as neat. His was a small farm, but everything about it was well kept. Professions to me have always indicated the character and nature of the man who practices them. I will go a step farther even than Horace, in his beautiful first Ode, where he tells us that you could not tempt him "who delights to cut with his hoe his patrimonial fields" to become a timorous sailor and cross the seas, by adding that both the farmer's and the sailor's choice of occupation was more the effect than the cause of character. And that even the hunter, "unmindful of his

tender spouse" and he "whom it delights to have collected Olympic dust in the chariot-race," aye, even he "who despises not cups of old Massic,"—all, like water, have risen or fallen in occupation to the level of their character. No money-lender was ever heartily a physician; no poet a lawyer; no soldier a merchant.

And so I knew Truxton was a good man by his pear orchard, and a quiet, honest one by his apple orchard. I knew he loved good books and birds by his currant and cherry trees. I knew he was romantic by the way he planted his strawberry-beds. In fact, I knew he loved all nature because he planted fruit trees, and all men because they bore fruit for them. And here is a thought that is beautiful to me: that years after we are dead, by an act of ours in life we may still give, through the trees we have planted, sweet gifts to those who shall come after us; that year after year, the trees we have tended and nursed and reared shall live on, and drop into the lap of each generation luscious, golden-bowled mementoes from a hand that is still.

And how easy it is to do this, to help others after we are gone. If we were selfish enough to desire it, could we design a way to make mankind remember us more surely ? Who has ever plucked a peach from a tree and failed to wonder who planted the tree ? Who has eaten a cherry and been so selfish as not to care to know the name of the thoughtful giver of the gift ? Let him stop and think. Was ever such sweet fame from books or battles ? Was ever immortality so easily earned in any other way ? A generous thought, a spade, a few moments of pleasant labor,—years afterward and a thousand cherries drop plump into rosy-cheeked mouths, a hundred apples, year after year, are hid away in urchin pockets. And from the unknown land where our own spirits dwell, will not the russet and red of their bright earthly cheeks add even a richer glow to our spiritual ones ? For at last, when we come to die, the thing with us is not how much we have done for God—who really needs nothing at our hands —as how much we have done for his children, our fellow-men. And so I think it is better to found a nursery than a new sect. I had rather

plant cherries than discord—peaches than political parties. I had rather write flowers than poems—preach apples than sermons. For an orchard in bloom is a poem, and an orchard ripe is a sermon.

I remember last Spring, when all of Mr. Truxton's acres of apples were in bloom, I rode over and through them, just at sunset. Was ever anything so beautiful? As far as the eye could see it was banks and banks of blossoms, billows and billows of pink and white and green, until I felt as though I was a-sail in a sea of sapphire, under snowy floating clouds streaked with the purple of the sleepy setting sun; and the wind came over the sea of them as from the vales of a flowered port where memory hides her sweetest things. I was lost in an ocean of flowers. I was buried in a sea of bloom. I rode to a neighboring hill and looked down, and there in a valley, shut in by evergreen hills, a mighty, unseen hand had gathered a gigantic handful of flowers and placed them in an emerald bowl.

I learned while I was ill that Mr. Truxton had been at Lynwood a great deal of late;

indeed, since being informed of it, I remember in a vague way seeing him one night gazing at me in his quiet fashion as he stood by my bedside. Miss Cynthia was standing near him. I think it was the time I came so near dying. It must have been a dream, surely—at least that was always the part that troubled me—anyway, she seemed to have her hands in his, and as she looked at me—dying, as she thought—she laid her head on his shoulder and wept.

I was reminded of all this one day by seeing Truxton strolling leisurely across the lawn, then up to the porch. In his pockets were a half-dozen rosy-red wine-saps. Miss Cynthia did not know I was at the window, and she went to meet him. As she did so she looked across and saw me watching her with an amused smile. Then she turned as red as one of the wine-saps itself.

I heard them whispering awhile in the hall, and then it all came to me, and I wondered at my stupidity. I became so interested and excited I think I even laughed to myself. They whispered and whispered, and I knew it

meant that they had decided that I must know it all, and this whispering was the council of war—nay, rather the rolling of this wooden horse into my unsuspecting fortress.

After a while they walked in very soberly, Miss Cynthia leading and looking very rosy and interesting. In fact she carried apples in her hands and in her cheeks. But I was amused at Truxton and the Sunday-school, pious, yet determined look he carried on his face. He halted in the doorway, then turned pale. Then he rushed at a chair and turned red. Then he stammered a salutation and plumped down into the chair.

I had noticed before that he never perspired save in one spot, a perfectly round bald one, on the extreme top of his head, from which the hair gradually receded in all directions with a regularity and evenness that was a geometrical wonder to have been chance. He mopped that spot vigorously with his handkerchief. Now whenever Mr. Truxton did that I knew he was warm. It was evident he had been posted to speak first, for Miss Cynthia only looked at him and kept turning redder.

The thing was contagious, and I felt that I was beginning to blush for them myself.

"I—I—never—was much at telling such things"—said Mr. Truxton, apparently talking to Miss Cynthia, but intending it for me.

"But you must—er—er Da—vid!"—with a jerk and gasp for breath in which the "David" came with such startling suddenness as to cause that good little gentleman to jump from his chair, and, as he always did when he did not know what else to do, he began to hunt in his pocket for the illustrated catalogue of his fruit trees.

Having pronounced the name, as in duty bound, Miss Cynthia drew a long breath and looked relieved. The opportunity to tease was too great for me to resist.

"I never should have suspected it of you, Miss Cynthia," I said. "Not that you will not have my assent and congratulations—both of you—but you, Miss Cynthia, of all women! —How in the world did it happen and I not find it out?"

She came over very graciously and sat down by my side. Then she very tenderly took

my hand in hers. There was moisture in her eyes when she looked at me and said,

"It all began, Ned, with the picture of a rose."

This reminded Truxton that he must help out. He started again, visibly, at Miss Cynthia's remark, and began to feel around in his pockets for the pictures of the fruits and flowers all nurserymen have to illustrate their wares. For my part I take no stock in them, for after years of buying and experimenting, I find that my roses never look half so gorgeous as the pictured one, nor my fruit so beautiful and large as those they are supposed to grow up to and resemble.

Mr. Truxton nervously unfolded his leaves of roses. He hung over a chair the picture of a crimson beauty, budding with an aroma one might almost detect even on paper.

"The Miss Cynthia—er—er—ahem!—color, clear bright carmine—very large and finely shaped—well formed—exquisitely so—er—ahem!" the original was visibly embarrassed and had turned away her head—"with a perfume exceedingly delicate and fresh—ahem!"

"You see, Ned," said Miss Cynthia, "we needed some new roses in the garden, and I asked Mr. Truxton to come over with his samples. Now wasn't it strange that the very one he selected had my name, and that he should have said all these charming things about it?"

"A very fine rose," went on Truxton professionally—"a very fine, old-fashioned rose——"

"I was never more astonished in my whole life," whispered Miss Cynthia.

"Grafted from a famous stock of red roses which grew so profusely in the South before the war," he went on. "The old stock not quite hardy enough for Tennessee winters, and not as productive of buds in season as demanded by the climate——"

"I felt so sorry for him, Ned," she whispered, "it seemed so hopeless of him——"

"And so after years of trying, experimenting, hard work, aye, even of yearnings, to produce a new rose——"

"Wasn't that just pitiful, Ned?—such constancy!—such devotion!"

"This one rewarded me——"

"How could I help it, Ned?"

"By bursting into bloom one day——"

"Oh, I shall never forget that sweet, sweet day," said Miss Cynthia laying her hand affectionately on his shoulder.

"For all my years of work and devotion."

"And did he not deserve it, Ned?"

"So that now," went on Mr. Truxton, "I have a rose——"

The rose blushed becomingly.

"Which—er—er—which—" he stammered, but still professionally, "is guaranteed, Mr. Ballington, with proper cultivation to produce more buds—er—er——"

"Da—vid!"

He mopped his bald spot in great confusion.

"But I must be quite frank about this rose," he went on; "it is a little peculiar and requires delicate handling——"

"Now David—you know that is exaggerated and I am not at all peculiar."

"During the first part of its growth, and, later, it will be deficient in robustness, un-

satisfactory in growth—reserved—so to speak, you know——"

Miss Cynthia looked at him reproachfully.

"Wasn't it just too lovely of him, Ned, to say all of those things about me! And it all started with that picture of a rose. He told me all of that the first time he came over here—all of those lovely things. Of course I ordered ten, Ned," she added in a practical way—"the older roses were nearly all killed last winter. I ordered ten, and told him he must come over and set one out each day. I wouldn't agree to pay him, Ned," she whispered, "until he agreed to come over and set them out himself. Now, David," she blushed and said to Truxton, "tell him about your next visit when you came to set them out. Listen, Ned."

"This rose needs most careful transplanting and cultivation," he went on. "I alone seem to understand just how to do it—natural, you know, since I originated it."

"Yes, yes—David—of course—we understand."

"The plants must be a little aged before

attempting it—a little aged—but age adds to their beauty, when—when—er—er—the roses come, you know ?"

"Beautiful—so beautiful"—whispered Miss Cynthia—"and remember, Ned, he told me that every day for ten days before I would give him any satisfaction. Oh, I despise myself when I think how obstinate I was !"

Mr. Truxton ceased. We waited awhile, but he did not begin again.

"And so you came every day, David, didn't you, to see about it ?" went on Miss Cynthia—"You know you guaranteed them to live, David."

"I guarantee all my trees and flowers to live," he said.

"And one day you told me, David, that you had named that rose for me, because it was so like me in every way——"

"In every way," he repeated.

"And one beautiful afternoon, just at sunset, when we found the first blossom, and you said—and you said "—stammered and blushed Miss Cynthia—"that I——"

He came over by her and took her hand.

"That you were lovelier and sweeter than the rose, dear; and that although I loved it because it was my very own, that I had made it and propagated it and claimed its very existence and its being, but that——"

He waited—his eyes sought hers. They met his, and in the meeting I saw Miss Cynthia, as I had known her, pass quite away and out of the world. In her place was a happy-visioned, radiant-eyed creature into whose life had come the sunlight of love.

"But that"—she whispered after awhile.

His bashfulness and professional ways had gone. Love had worked its miracle in him, too. O divinest of miracles!—O true fountain of perpetual youth!

He was not a nurseryman any longer, but a lover. And she—was an angel.

They sat holding hands, oblivious even of me. Had I been able I should have left them thus, for what followed seemed too sacred for any ears but theirs. His voice sank low and tender.

"But that," he finally said, "if the original would give me the sweet privilege, I would

love and cherish her even more—and—and ——"

"And if she would"—she took it up—"would she pin this, the first rose of their together nourished vine, in his button-hole, and——"

They ceased, and Truxton took tenderly from an envelope in his pocket the faded rose which she had pinned over his heart.

And that is the story of their love—a love which, though coming into both their lives after the sun-spots on the floor had long passed the noon-mark, lit them, therefore, not with the garishness of noonday, but with the tenderer romance of evening and the sacred starlight.

THE UNPACED RACE.

O IT'S 'lasses in de pud'n,
An' it's sugar in de cake,
An' it's kissin' till you cud'n—
Sorter dreamin', yet awake,
When de sulky 'gins to glide it
An' you feel de feelin' cum
When de slippers 'gin to slide it,
An' de wheels begin to hum—
An' de wheels begin to hum—
'Gin to hum—hum—hum—
An' de wheels begin to hum.

O it's 'taters round de possum,
An' it's gravy in de pot,
An' it's yaller-gals in blossom,
An' it's Charley on de spot—
When de hoofs begin to patter
Lak de fiddle an' de drum,
An' yo' blues begin to scatter
When de wheels begin to hum—
When de wheels begin to hum—

A Summer Hymnal

'Gin to hum—hum—hum—
An' de wheels begin to hum.

Sum lak to sail de oshun,
Sum to hump it on a wheel—
Ev'ry man unto his noshun,
Ev'ry ship unto its keel;
But lem'me own a pacer,
An' when de summons cum
Lem'me go behind a racer
When de wheels begin to hum—
When de wheels begin to hum—
'Gin to hum—hum—hum—
An' de wheels begin to hum.

CHAPTER XX.

IT was six o'clock one afternoon—I shall never forget that day—when I went to the station to see Marjorie off to the races. It was a rich stake—ten thousand dollars—in which she was entered, but I knew it was ours if ever this wonderful filly turned her face to the starter. For her speed was phenomenal, her gameness equalled only by her rich blood-lines, and she went like a horse with a heart in her. I myself had timed her miles at a rate I dared not tell, but it had swept me off my feet. I knew that in her class there was nothing in all the world that could beat her.

How beautiful she looked that afternoon, her form taking on the joyous fever of the excitement, her limbs like the marbled ones of the Greek horses on the frieze of the Parthenon—her whole being keyed to the subtle nicety and balanced equipoise of a steel-strung ma-

chine—a racing machine, indeed, and one without a flaw.

The trainer stood smiling at the car door.

Old Wash, who was to go with her, had proudly led her in, and stood with his pockets full of apples, giving her one occasionally, and soothing the sensitive creature for the start of the car, stroking her chestnut crest with a faithful old hand that, in days gone by—slave days and free days—had grasped so often the burden of duty and carried it so unselfishly. It was a hard black hand, it is true, but it was faithful and honest, and in its rough grip more gentleness dwelt, more truth and honor lay, than in many another of softer parts and finer turn. For it had been blackened like the roots of the black-oak—twisted and hardened, gnarled and knotted in the primal fight for life with the elements of nature. But uncouth and unbeautiful as it was, it had borne its full burden in the fight of civilization and the battle of the brave. And so it was misshapen and its joints were large from strain and toil, and the veins ran through it like the channels of a stream deep cut, and it was sloughed in like

the turn of the plow-handle, and set in like the grip of an ax-helm, and was deep set and scarred. But if, that day, there had come a deep upheaval of the earth in the fusion of rock and matter, and this hand, of all earth's civilization, had alone left its imprint there to be read eons of ages hence by beings of enlightenment and light in the museum of a higher civilization, well might it stand, imbedded in some kindred block of stone, not to point the name and lineage of some prehistoric animal, nor even the hand of a savage in the jungles of an earlier earth-life, but through all the ages of all time it would stand as the track of Duty in the Man age of the earth.

Now it gently stroked the filly's cheek. We stood around in a group, each silently admiring her. The trainer's practiced eye ran over her form, then he ran his thumb and finger down the tendons of her hard, flat legs. He pressed with his thumbs her deep-set, sloping sides, and the flesh rebounded under his touch like solid rubber.

"Three heats better than 2.10 on a half-

mile track, yesterday, and she but a three-year-old," he said admiringly—"we will bring home the purse and the world's record, Mr. Ballington."

> "An' we won't come home till mornin',
> An' we ain't gwi' walk at all!"

sang old Wash.

"She will have a plucky field to battle with," I suggested.

"I know them all," went on her driver—"they are good, but not one of them can pace it in 2.10."

"They are good," he continued, "but this mare is phenomenal—she has got them at her mercy. We will pull out at ten o'clock," and he looked at his watch. "No, Wash," he laughed—"we will not walk home, not if she lives to score down for the word." And so we stood in a group around her, and no queen of society ever received more gracefully. I could see it all, and so plainly—the shouting grand stand, the flying filly out-footing her field and coming in to fame and fortune. I could feel it all, and so keenly—I, who had bred

and raised her. My own pride and joy—that keen satisfaction that comes to but few who rear race horses and who love them for the nobility of the animal—that comes to but few, and that, perhaps, but once in a life time.

I had yet to learn that the unpaced races were the real races of our lives. And yet, how often we spend life training for the great race of the future—which never comes off—struggling, hardening, exerting, denying ourselves for battles we are never to know, for victories we are never to win. Planning for the time when our colors shall show first at the front and the plaudits of the world be ours. Struggling, training on. And after the years have passed, after the day when the great battle and great victory was to have been, then it is that we look back in wonder at the real races of our lives--the unpaced races we have won. And we wonder the more when we see that we have won them in our seeming unpreparedness—pitched headlong into the unexpected fray of the present we have found the faith and strength of the day equal to the need of it, and so, look-

ing ever to the great battle of the future, One has led us, for the faith and earnestness that was in us, to win the real victories of the past.

The unpaced race—how uncertain, how real!

For the next instant a carriage drove hastily up and I saw the Blind Man beckoning to me.

When I reached the carriage door he almost pulled me in as he said, excitedly,

"I have looked for you for two hours—read it, Ned—read it, quick!"

I took the note he handed me—a crumpled one from Thesis. At sight of the well-known handwriting I felt the blood rush through my heart. It was a minute before I could open it —it was another minute more before I could read,

"Tem!—Tem! Come take me and save me! —your poor distracted little girl! The Bank is to fail to-morrow and Uncle to be a felon if I do not marry him. I have no one on earth to appeal to but you. If you do not come by ten to-night, I fear——"

I could read no more. I threw the note down. The Blind Man was looking at me with

blanched cheeks. Then there swept over his face such a joy as I had never seen before.

"Go!" I cried. "For God's sake go!"

My voice seemed to arouse him. I was beside myself with impatience, but I watched him closely. For a moment he hesitated, but only for a moment. For a moment the halo of joy lingered around his brow, ending in the span of a rainbow in his sightless eyes. For a moment I saw the same light shine there I had once seen in the shadow of a church door. Then it passed like a chastened beam of sunset reaching out and upward into the realms of night.

He took my hand. All the excitement, all the doubt, all the haste were gone.

"Ned—dear Ned—if you love me, if you love her as I know you do. Go! and God be with you!"

I scarcely knew what I did except that I sprang from the carriage and rushed to the ticket office. But the six o'clock train had already passed.

I rushed back only to find the carriage gone.

There was nothing else to do. I went quickly to the car door—the trainer had gone.

"Wash, lead out the filly and her racing sulky."

The old man looked at me with exasperating coolness I thought; then, when he realized, he stammered,

"For heaben sake, Young Marster—what you mean?"

"I must drive her to Nashville," I said, "and drive her there in two hours."

The old man drew himself up and shouted indignantly,

"I belonged to yo' grandfather, I raised yo' father an' I nussed you. I've nurver questioned de wurd of a Ballington nor disobeyed enny order. But I'll look you squar' in de eye an' see you kill me in my tracks befo' you shall lay a hand on dis filly!"

"Wash! Wash! You do not understand," I cried. "It is not for my sake—not for any of our sakes—it's to save *her!*"

His countenance changed. His look went through me—a look of astonishment, fear and pity. In a moment he seemed to grasp it all.

Then he led the filly out without a word, threw on the racing harness, buckled the shaft-band while the tears ran down his cheeks, handed me the reins as I sprang to the seat, pressed my hand and stammered, between his tears,

"It breaks my heart to see her killed in dis drive—but—but—Little Glory—Little Glory —ennything fur Little Glory!"

As I wheeled away he had taken off his old hat and dropped by the car door in prayer.

A PIKE OF BATTLES.

GLEAM of bay, effort of fire,
Will of death and dumb desire—
Onward—onward—to the wire.
Feet that falter not, nor heed—
Soul of strength and soul of speed
Speed—Speed!

Gleam of bay, answering sky,
Heart of hope and hero-high—
Onward—onward—do or die!
Form that knows not blight nor blame
Blazoned on the shield of fame
Fame—Fame!

CHAPTER XXI.

I LOOKED at my watch—it was just seven as we sped along the streets of the town, and in a minute more the iron bridge over the Duck loomed up in the twilight. My face was set, my heart beat wildly, my fingers seemed driven into the reins. The hopelessness of it all went through me and fixed it as in a seal of fire. I saw everything, remembered everything, even to the drift of the smoke across the river. I was provoked with myself—with Marjorie—it seemed so hopeless, so desperate a trial for us. Perhaps I was nervous and in that stage when little things worry most, but I remember fretting because the mare seemed to know nothing of it—nothing of the struggle and strife ahead, nothing of the hope that hung on her heels, nothing of the forty long miles over which she was to be tested as horse had never been before, nothing of the agony

at this end, the doubt and despair at the other, nothing of the cruelty of the fate that lay coiled in the fact that I, who had reared and loved her—I, who had cared for and developed her—now must sit behind her—an executioner—and drive her to her death.

She darted playfully from a passing vehicle, tossed her head and sped away as if she thought it was but an evening's jaunt—an exercise to unloose the limbs trained for higher things. I felt like the executioner I was—my heart sank with a double sorrow.

"God help us, little mare," I muttered—"God help us and help her!"

That cool air was from the river. The big bluffs threw the shadows across the stream, and the dim moonlight that fell across them, from boulder shadow and darkling peak, pictured in the depths of this pearl-stream a Switzerland below, companion to the one above.

Half-way across the bridge, the quaint old cemetery on the river's bluff, full to overflowing with the shadowy memories of lives that had been, was the parting view I had of home;

and as I thought of it all, the drive before me, the extremity which made Thesis make the appeal she did, the cool villainy of Forde, the unselfishness of the Blind Man, I almost wished that I, too, had been laid away in the old cemetery, forever at rest by the side of the pearl-studded stream.

On the bridge Marjorie shied at the big rafters and played fear again. Then she thought she was on a race track and darted a two-minute gait across. The sparks flew from her steel shoes as she struck the flint of the Nashville pike, and then she struck a steady pace that swept me along as a bubble on the brow of a mill-race. I tried to take her up, but she plunged and fretted.

"Easy, sweetheart, easy!" I whispered. "I would not kill you so soon." She grew calmer at the sound of my voice, then tossed her head in the old trusting way she had. The very confidence of it went through me like a stab. I felt sick with sorrow for her—sick with the hopelessness of it,—and before I thought, I had pulled her up. Then, for a moment, I hesitated as I stood and watched

her in the moonlight—this beautiful creature of nerve and fire, giving her life with a line in her mouth, giving her breath with a bit in her teeth, trusting it all to a hand and a head that would drive her free and willing spirit to death.

For a moment I hesitated. The long white pike lay before me, the blue shadowy hills rose beyond, and once more the hopelessness of it all came over me. I clenched my teeth—I could scarcely sit in the sulky. Coward that I was, I tried to turn her home again. Halfway, she turned, as I hesitatingly used the line, then—did she know it?—did she realize it?—game beauty that she was, she wheeled the other way as if scoring for the word, and went with a rush.

"God help us little mare—God help us and help her!"

My voice seemed to quiet her, and I talked on. "A bitter drive it is, Marjorie—a bitter drive and useless! A race such as neither of us ever dreamed of, a battle no horse ever had before. There is death in every mile of this pike, for the pike itself is a pike of battles.

This was the battle-ground of the Confederacy, the turning-point of its destiny. Here, on that old bridge below, Buell made up the hours that saved Grant's army at Pittsburg Landing that Sunday night on the sixth of April, 1862, which made Grant a President instead of a prisoner, and welded two sections into one glorious nation. On what little things do the destiny of men and nations seem to hang—seem to hang, Marjorie, but God sees all and turns even the straws of destiny with the breath of his silent lips.

"A pike of battles it is, and every mile a battle ground. Here, for four long years Blue and Gray charged and re-charged, captured and re-captured. Van Dorn, Forest, Wheeler, Hood; Wilson, Buell, Schofield, Thomas—skirmish and battle line, bullet and bloody sword, sabre and severed heads; marching and counter-marching, dust and dying moan—a long white road of rock and grinding metal, a race-track of death, with the butchery of Franklin at one end and the slaughter of Nashville at the other."

She was pacing steadily and true. We sped

by a spring that ran from a blue grass lot in the edge of a field by the roadside. "Jackson's spring, Marjorie — the memory of Old Hickory! Here he rested and disbanded his brave pioneer soldiers after the Creek War and the victory of New Orleans that gave us half a century of peace. May we imbibe some of his deathless spirit for the task before us."

Along the river bank we flew, the silent stream lying asleep, like a great silver snake in the moonlight; then up the slope and down through the toll-gate. The cool night wind brought back my calmer self, and I took out my watch to time the miles. She heard the watch-spring snap and knew what it meant, for she flew away, thinking she was on a track and scoring for the word. But I held her to a three-minute gait, and when she reached Rutherford Hill in just five minutes, I pulled her to a quiet pace and looked back for the last time on the lights of the town three miles away, on the heights of Mount Parnassus crowning the town with its huge round top, not unlike the tiers of some ancient amphitheater

filled with the ghostly spectators of by-gone years.

From the top of Rutherford Hill to the top of Mount Parnassus above the town is three miles as the crow flies; and between these two peaks is a valley as fertile as Poe's immortal bird ever flew over, with a river flowing through it as picturesque as it is unique. It was Tuesday, the 29th day of November, 1864, that Hood's starved but brave and desperate army crossed the Duck River on its raid into this garden spot of the South, from the defeats of Atlanta, with the wild dream of wresting it from the sturdy Thomas at Nashville. Schofield, with his picked army corps, had barely time to rush up from the Tennessee, in an effort to fall back on Thomas, at Nashville, and barely escaped being cut off at Columbia and Spring Hill. But he burned the bridge in his rear, and here from the peak of Parnassus, above the town, to the peak of Rutherford, over the creek, an artillery duel was fought that made the valley hot with shells. Then Hood crossed two miles east of town, at the old ford, and the march and retreat went on

—on across this pike of battles, built for a pike of peace.

Down the long Rutherford Hill Marjorie would speed but I held her in. The old covered bridge shook and rattled beneath the sturdy strokes of her regular stride, until I feared it would go down with us. On—on—we sped over the creek where Forest fought, up the slope and away. I knew she was now warm and relaxed, and I let her set the pace—and never did mare enjoy it more. On—on we sped, past the old Polk place where a great President spent his youth.

On a long stretch of the pike, beautiful and quiet in shadowy sleep, we passed by an old-time Southern mansion, standing in a grove of beech and maple to the right.

"The Cheairs place, Marjorie," I said. "Here on that fateful November morning breakfasted for the last time on earth Cleburne, Strahl, Granbury, Adams and Gist, that matchless quintet of brave generals who, before supper, lay dead around the breastworks of Franklin, while thousands of the boys in Gray who marched that day along

this shaded avenue, and thousands of those in Blue, who fell back before them, gave up their lives with them. And here, where we now fly by," I said, as we passed a country lane opening into the pike, "is where Hood's army should have attacked and cut off Schofield, where the battle should have been fought, where Schofield, his men demoralized and falling back, his wagon-train stretched out for miles and exposed, should have been cut off and captured. Here is where Hood sent orders for Cheatham to attack,—orders which Cheatham never received; where Forest, ever alert, lay with his bold cavalry along the pike, saw the Blue army rushing by in confusion, and walked the pike in rage and chagrin. Let us call it, Marjorie, the lane of Lost Opportunities, so many of which open, unexpectedly, into the pike of our lives. Alas, for the Confederacy—alas, for the things we would to be, but which God wills otherwise. For His plans are wiser than man's plans, Marjorie—and so, to-night, in the reunited strength of our brotherhood of union, we weep and laugh, we sigh and smile and see that it is best."

It was a level stretch to the bridge, then up to the top of Picnic Hill. I thrust the head of a match against the wheel as we flew along and glanced at my watch—7.30!

"The record, Marjorie! Eleven miles in thirty minutes, up hill and down. No living horse has had the speed and heart to do that before—none will ever do it again."

The village of Spring Hill now lay at my feet in the moonlight. Down the slope we sped, passing an old brick house standing to the right and away from the road amid tangled undergrowth and gloom. "Where General Van Dorn was killed," I whispered. "It is a sweet and peaceful village, now, Marjorie, surrounded by this matchless country, and resting here like a high born maiden in her father's halls; but many a tale of blood it could tell."

Just beyond the toll-gate we passed the spot where Forest's brother fell, and where the great cavalry leader of the Confederacy laid down his sword long enough to melt his iron soul in sorrow. We dashed through the toll-gate and up the pike. A blue-grass mound

was on the left. I took off my hat. "Hark, Marjorie, to a tale of our reunited country. That blue-grass mound tells it all. That is the grave of a Union soldier, washed up last year by a little creek that flowed through that paddock. And his story is this :

"On the night before the battle of Franklin, he had been ordered to stand guard on the picket line, here on the very outposts of Schofield's army, as Hood thundered on his heels, and here, in the dark night, this sentinel had given up his life for his country—this picket had been 'off duty forever,' and for over thirty years he was numbered among the unreturned dead. In the morning, when Hood's army marched by to Franklin, he had been rudely thrown into a sink-hole, by the side of the little stream which ran crimson with his blood. But, strange to tell, when the waters of the little creek, after all these years, had changed its course and washed away the bank that hid him, the picket was not off duty, but there he stood, upright, on the creek bank, wrapped in his raincoat, his cap, with the visor of a Wisconsin regiment,

on his head, and his right hand raised as if giving the eternal salute, through all these years, to the flag of his country. Tenderly was he relieved from his duty ; and the hands that once tossed him into a sink-hole, in tears and sorrow laid him away, there in that quiet meadow, his sod a verdure of Southern blue-grass, his decorations the daisies which Southern children planted over him, and the land where he died as an enemy now honoring him as a friend.

"Hark ! Marjorie, does not that tell the whole story ?"

I strained my eyes in the distance. Near the blue-grass mound I beheld a homely-looking old bay mare, cropping the grass in the starlight.

"Old Sweepstakes, Marjorie, the dam of world-beaters. Does not the blood of her own matchless son, Star Pointer, flow in your veins ? Go ! mare, go !"

It was a heart-killing pace to Thompson's Station, for the pike was level and good. In a little branch I stopped for a moment and dipped my hat into the water. I gave her six

swallows, dashed the rest in her face and on her flanks, jumped into the sulky and was off again.

It was now quite dark as we flew along. And here an accident happened that nearly cost me my life. The mare was going like a whirlwind, when all at once I saw her spring into the air, barely in time to save herself. The next instant the sulky shot down into an open culvert and I went over the wheel. It was a second before I came to. My first thought was that she had run away and left me, and my heart sank at the thought. Instead, she had stopped, turned round, and stood over me as I lay half senseless and was licking my face. I could not help it, I kissed her soft nozzle. I blessed her for a mare that was more human than horse. "God bless you, Marjorie, there was never one like you!"

I sprang again to the seat and we were away.

"Thompson Station, Marjorie, battle after battle around it, and one that was particularly brilliant. Here, in the earliest days of the

war, the intrepid Forest, with eight hundred men, defeated and captured General Coburn and his brigade. Here the gallant Shafter, then almost a boy, gave up his sword fighting to the last; and lived to lead the armies of our reunited Country against Santiago and to command in that battle an old Confederate Major-General. God knows best!"

From Thompson Station to Franklin is nine miles, the pike winding in and out, up and down, level stretch and sloping hill. And all along I talked to her, this filly of blood and nerve, racing like a frictionless engine, the strokes of her sweeping limbs like those of the pistons of a mighty locomotive, and yet skimming along as gracefully as a swallow flies. We drove from the Station to the Atha Thomas school-house, three miles, in ten minutes.

Here was the fearful artillery duel on Hood's famous retreat, when from hill to hill the starved and disheartened Confederates stopped and stood like a wounded bull or turned and charged their maddening pursuers. Three miles further we were at Winston Hill, and

from the top, away in the distance, I saw the lights of Franklin. My watch showed just eight o'clock! My heart beat wildly now, and hope came, swift and true. I reached out and felt the flanks of the game mare that had brought me twenty miles in an hour on the road, a record I knew flesh and blood would never make again. She was as wet as a blanket dipped in a spring, but no foam was in her flanks, and I knew her muscles were soft and pliant and her skin in the condition of race horses. There was no friction there.

The little town of Franklin lies in a bend of the Harpeth. In the bend, and behind the town, are the bluffs of the river. At the highest point of this bluff, on Figuer's Hill, I saw, still standing, the grim outline of the Federal fort that poured its screaming shot and shell into Hood's army on that woful last day of November, 1864, when they formed for their charge against the Federal line of breastworks that ran in front of, and around the town, from river to river again.

On the top of Winston's Hill, on my left, was an old linden tree—I saw it standing in

the starlight—where General Hood sat and gave his fateful orders for the brave brigades to go down to their death.

"It is hard,—hard, Marjorie—but this, this is truly the battlefield of death. Here around this little town nine battles were fought in that unholy war. Uncover, mare, uncover, for we tread on the very threshold of death.

"Here, where we now fly along, the Confederate army formed. Down this pike and over these fields they charged and recharged, from four o'clock until midnight, storming these breastworks of death thirteen brutal butchering times. Uncover, mare, uncover!

"Across the fields they swept, nearly half a hundred thousand men, in battle array, with drums beating, and flying, flaunting flags. Across, from the fort, thundered and screamed the iron shells, and in front lay Schofield's army behind entrenchments which Balaklava could not have turned, nor Trafalgar silenced. Uncover, mare, uncover!

"Right there was the old cotton-gin, in front of which lay the gallant Cleburne. This is the Carter house, riddled with bullet and shell.

Yonder Adams and his horse lay, half over the Union breastwork. Here were Gist and Strahl and Granbury, all field officers, dead—while soldiers, dead, lay for half a mile so thick, one could walk across the battlefield with the dead as stepping-stones. Uncover, mare, uncover!

"They wore the gray, then, Marjorie, and perchance their sons would to-day—even under the old flag,—but now that it is all over, the sons of those who died around these breastworks of death in brave and honest endeavor to tear down the flag of their country, these would die to-night to place it there again! Uncover, mare, uncover!"

We rushed through the town of Franklin, and at a stable door I stopped, sprang from the sulky, unchecked and called for a bucket of water. She begged piteously for it all, but I gave her but three swallows. I dashed the rest in her face, then put my ear to her heaving flank. It rose and fell like the waves of the sea when the hurricane drives in from the deep. It beat like the tramp of an army in a death-run for victory. It scudded and swelled

and rolled like black clouds before the whirlwind's breath—but there was no uncertain sound, no fluttering, no thumping. Nature's machinery was working like clockwork.

I patted her cheek—she whinnied back in my face, begging for water I dared not give. Instead, I took quickly from my pocket a flask and poured half of it down her throat. As I sprang into the sulky a man rushed out.

"My God!" he cried, "are you mad? Where to?"

"To Nashville in an hour," I called back.

I saw him throw up his hands and shout, but already I was half-way through the town.

On—on—we flew—the mare seemed crazed and ablaze with speed—her brain was fire, her limbs the flash of it—my arms seemed bands of stiff, cold iron—my spine ached, my shoulders were adamant, my head—lead. I felt that I should faint. I reeled in the seat and clutched at space. In a sulky there is nothing to hold to but the lines.

"God help us," I cried. "If I faint we are lost."

A moment later, when I regained my senses,

I was still in the sulky seat—my head had fallen on her croup. She had stopped until I revived. She had saved me again.

"Eighteen more miles! Oh, if we can only live to do it, Marjorie!"

Roper's Knob on the right, grim and silent.

The Soule place. Something thundered beneath me like the rumbling of distant cannon; we had run over the little bridge at Spencer's Creek. On—on—I let her go, past the old Stanley tavern, the McEwen place—Cox pike and Mallory Station. I tried to pull her up. We seemed to be boring a door in the darkness—a continual door, opening to our rush, closing as we went through. I could not stop her. The whiskey had gone to her head, and she raced like a maddened thing. The fire flew from her hoofs on the flint of the pike. She had broken her check rein, and with her head down she was running away at a pace.

At the Holly Spring Gap I scarcely saw the log house where the bandit, Murrill, and his gang used to meet, and where so many travelers had given up their lives in darkness and in silence. Then we plunged into the dark-

ness of the Gap, into the midnight gloom, cold and heavy, and holding the lines as I was, seeing nothing before me, I appeared to myself to fly from midnight into the mouth of darkness. The next instant I felt a shock, and shot like a bolt from my seat. I clutched the air as I went, and came down in a dazed heap, my arm around the filly's neck, and she staggering wildly for her feet. She had gone down and I had been thrown from my seat, but had caught her neck as I went over her head.

In an instant I had struck a match, and there in the darkness I drank of the gloom of it—never had such despair and sorrow overtaken me. After such a battle, after such a race, such superhuman strength and gameness—now to fail! She had broken both knees, and the blood flowed in streams to her hoofs. But she did not wince. Only she stood looking at me in baby-eyed, wondering astonishment—that I should take this cruel way of killing her. I shall never forget it, for as I tore my handkerchief in twain and tied the strips around her knees I felt her soft, pitying nose laid gently on my cheek. I felt her impatient

nibble to be gone, and my heart revived again with hope. I could not help it—when I sprang to the seat again,—the tears were streaming down my cheek.

And though her knees were broken, she did not wince when she felt the lines again, and only in the darkness could I see that she had worn off one of her steel shoes—worn it to a plate—a thread—to powder! Then I knew what a terrible drive it was to do that. I knew the shoe was gone, because the sparks would fly in the darkness from all the other feet but that, and when I thought of the agony that would soon be hers, when the flint and gravel had worn it to the quick, I almost wished she had died in the miles behind her. Lame in front—quicked behind—her knees broken and the blood pouring down, and yet never to wince, never to whine, never to quit—oh, Marjorie—Marjorie—would, would that mortal man were half so noble, half as game and good as you!

For five miles further, her feet flew with the regularity of a squadron marching. Past the old Tavern, the Zelner place, down the long

stretch of the Little Harpeth Valley—on—on with never a balk or break! I heard only the stroke of her sweeping stride, and felt the flying sulky move under me through the starlight!

"God help us, little mare!" was all I could say.

On—on—we flew—past Oden's, Moore's and Brentwood—past McNish's. Then two steel rails shot under me—I had crossed the railroad again. It was Baxter's crossing. The lights of Nashville were nearly in sight.

Oh, Thesis!

It was very dark, save for the starlight. I could not see my watch, but now that hope was in sight, my blood ran like a river afire, and my spirits came back like the ebb of a tide. Then I talked to Marjorie again:

"It is a pike of death, little mare, a pike of death, and once again we have plunged into a battlefield. This was the Confederate line in the battle around Nashville. This was the bleak and frozen plain and hillside, when, from the second day of that freezing December until the sixteenth, Hood's remnant of an

army stood and fired and froze and fell before the well-fed, well-protected veterans of the Rock of Chickamauga. Here, at last they gave way, and then began that stubborn, freezing, dying retreat that ended the war and buried the flags of the Lost Cause in the soil of its origin! Uncover, mare, uncover!"

She seemed to be beside herself with flight —never had I known such speed. The sparks ceased to fly from her near forefoot—I knew that shoe was gone too, and yet she did not wince—she did not flinch. The other was worn to the quick and left blood in her track, but, game creature that she was, I knew she would pace in, if but a bone remained for her to stand upon.

And then my heart gave a great leap, for in the night of stars and gloom I saw the great top of old Fort Negley loom up! I remember but confusedly from here in—the electric lights of the city, the clock in the Custom House tower —my plunge into a stable, my despair—my hope—my sorrow—joy! Despair and sorrow when I saw her stagger and fall at last—joy—

infinite joy—when I felt I should see Thesis again to protect, to save her!

And then I remember seeing a black shadow spring out from the darkness and catch the mare as she fell. I saw him on the floor, her head in his lap, and the blood-red whiskey, gurgling down her parched throat, while a sponge of water, ice-cold, played over her face and head.

"My God, Wash! How——"

"Drove to Spring Hill an' caught a freight—me and Marse Emerson. He's with her. Go quick!—quick! young Marster, ef you'd be of help! I'll save de filly—see ef I don't! This kind don't die fur a little drive lak dat. But fur God's sake, go!—they need you—quick!"

My blood seemed afire, and yet I was never cooler—never was I more resolved or determined. I seemed to stand on the brink of a tragedy, and I cared not whether it meant life or whether it meant death.

I flew up the steps of the house, where I knew she was, but I rang no bell, for it was fully lighted up, the doors open as if company

were there. At the inner door I stopped, and the blood flew from my cheek and left me, for the first time, trembling and almost fainting.

She stood by the Blind Man, as sad as a Madonna and as beautiful as an angel of light, and she held to his arm for protection. Her eyes seemed wild with a light I had never seen there before. Her uncle was beseeching; Joe Forde was sullen and determined. A man in a clerical coat was at the left.

Only the Blind Man stood like a lion in their path.

"She will marry me or that man wears stripes," Joe Forde was saying as I came up.

"It is to save me, Thesis," mumbled her uncle, sillily.

"Never—oh, uncle—never!" she pleaded. "Let him send me to prison——"

Then the Blind Man spoke, and never had I heard such a voice. He was not excited, not even angry; but it came with the clear, penetrating voice of the holy fire that leaped from heaven at Elijah's call from Mount Horeb, and burned the offerings and the altars of the priests of Baal.

"Joe Forde, you have played a false game and been caught in your own toils. You will wear the stripes yourself, if any are worn."

Forde turned, in the tantalizing, quiet way he had, and with a cynical, triumphant look, said simply, "What do you mean, sir?"

"You threw your bank-stock on the market this morning, and sold it for a song before you left, did you not?"

Forde did not reply, but stood looking at him over his eye-glasses in a condescending, self-arrogant way, as one who had made up his mind to be bored for a few minutes by a well-meaning but silly antagonist, before carrying his own point.

"Yes, you did," went on the Blind Man, quietly. "You sold it for ten cents on the dollar, and then you sneaked out of town and left your assistant cashier to open up a broken bank to-morrow, and a weak old president, whom you have robbed and beguiled, to bear the infamy of your own robbery."

Forde's manner instantly changed. I saw him flush quickly; then, for the first time in

my life, I saw him turn pale. A puzzled look also crept into his face.

"Now, it was my money—in fact, it was I who bought that stock this morning," coolly went on the Blind Man, "and I own and control that bank to-night. See!" he said, as he drew from his pocket a large envelope and handed it to Thesis: "It is yours," he said to her simply; "yours and Ned's—wait!"

Forde laughed ironically. "I would have warned you against buying worthless stock myself, if you had advised with me," he said. "There is no money in the vaults, and you know why," he said, turning to Colonel Philips.

The latter turned impatiently away.

"And there is where you are mistaken," went on the Blind Man quietly, but with that same penetrating voice. "I deposited all the money in the vaults at just ten minutes before six o'clock this afternoon."

"Oh!" laughed Forde, forcedly; "then you are richer than I suspected. But do you know that it will take two hundred thousand dollars to do that? And I don't suppose you

will find that sum every day in a sheep's track, eh ?"

"No," said the Blind Man, with a cruel, painful emphasis, and a voice that cut like a sword—"No, sir—not in a sheep's track ; but I found it in a wolf's track, where you had hid it, sir,—robbed the bank and that old man there and hid it. And I only put it back, sir, where it belonged—took it from the vaults of a tomb and put it into the vaults of a bank where you, thank Heaven, and other thieves, will have no authority to go in and steal."

There are times in their lives when men, even with the cool villainy of Joe Forde, when beaten, turn and forget all things else, to rend their conquerors. For a moment he was a maniac, and sprang at the Blind Man's throat with clinched teeth and uplifted hand.

But he never struck him. As far back as I can remember, it has been a rule of the Ballingtons to strike first and to strike hard ; and I put all my strength into that blow.

I was still looking at him, stretched senseless on the floor, when I heard Thesis scream, and then hold out both her hands to me. I

sprang quickly to her side. She was standing by a chair in which the Blind Man sat. His head had fallen back, and a smile so sweet and natural hung round his lips that I thought he was calling to me.

Then I looked into his eyes. They were no longer sightless, but, fixed in the far distance, I saw reflected there the glory and sweetness of another world. I realized it all only when I felt Thesis draw my hand in hers, and instantly we both knelt down beside him, while she sobbed in my arms and said:

"Oh, Ned!—Ned! He sees at last. It is endless, endless day with him now!"

MY LOVE HAS COME AS A LILY.

MY Love has come as a lily
In the good glad Easter-tide,
A sweet hope born with the risen morn,
Forever at my side.
And her eyes are the stars of the lily,
And her face is a snow-white bloom,
Lifting up, from the petal's cup,
The soul of a sweet perfume.

O Love, that has come as a lily,
O heart in the lily's fold,
You are mine to-night by the new-born light,
By the faith and the story of old—
You are mine to-night, O Love, by the right
Of the love my heart doth hold.

CHAPTER XXII.

SHALL I ever forget it—the sweet Easter week I brought her to the old place? We had had our first tea together, and now, in the twilight, we were sitting on the porch, where already the white rose-bush had begun to throw out its starry blossoms.

A beautiful chestnut head was thrust over the balcony from the lawn, begging for a lump of sugar. I had seen Marjorie limping across, with scarred knees and drawn tendons—blemishes that made her sacred to me—but in the game and resolute, tender eye, that begged playfully for sugar, there slumbered the never-dying light of a great, dumb victory. And she got her sugar, with a gentle caress, from hands that would, God willing, in the years to come, give her many more. Then two white arms stole around the filly's neck, and there was the natural sealing of a life's friendship.

And now, from the cherry tree, came a burst of glorious melody that made my heart melt. When it ceased, Thesis had laid her head on my shoulder, and was weeping.

"It is the mocking-bird, dear," she said, "and he is adding this sweet benediction to our wedded love."

But I had seen the flash of a slate-blue form that told me who the singer was.

"It's the cat-bird, sweet," I said; "love and a home have made him a great singer."

THE END.